Application of the Sea-Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM 5.0) to Matlacha Pass National Wildlife Refuge

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Introduction

Tidal marshes are among the most susceptible ecosystems to climate change, especially accelerated sea level rise (SLR). Sea level is predicted to increase by 30 cm to 100 cm by 2100 based on the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Emissions Scenarios (SRES) (Meehl et al. 2007). Rising sea level may result in tidal marsh submergence (Moorhead and Brinson 1995) and habitat migration as salt marshes transgress landward and replace tidal freshwater and brackish marsh (Park et al. 1991).

In an effort to address the potential effects of sea level rise on United States national wildlife refuges, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service contracted the application of the SLAMM model for most Region 4 refuges. This analysis is designed to assist in the production of comprehensive conservation plans (CCPs) for each refuge. A CCP is a document that provides a framework for guiding refuge management decisions. All refuges are required by law to complete a CCP by 2012.

Model Summary

Changes in tidal marsh area and habitat type in response to sea-level rise were modeled using the Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model (SLAMM 5.0) that accounts for the dominant processes involved in wetland conversion and shoreline modifications during long-term sea level rise (Park et al. 1989; www.warrenpinnacle.com/prof/SLAMM).

Successive versions of the model have been used to estimate the impacts of sea level rise on the coasts of the U.S. (Titus et al., 1991; Lee, J.K., R.A. Park, and P.W. Mausel. 1992; Park, R.A., J.K. Lee, and D. Canning 1993; Galbraith, H., R. Jones, R.A. Park, J.S. Clough, S. Herrod-Julius, B. Harrington, and G. Page. 2002; National Wildlife Federation et al., 2006; Glick, Clough, et al. 2007; Craft et al., 2009.

Within SLAMM, there are five primary processes that affect wetland fate under different scenarios of sea-level rise:

- **Inundation:** The rise of water levels and the salt boundary are tracked by reducing elevations of each cell as sea levels rise, thus keeping mean tide level (MTL) constant at zero. The effects on each cell are calculated based on the minimum elevation and slope of that cell.
- **Erosion:** Erosion is triggered based on a threshold of maximum fetch and the proximity of the marsh to estuarine water or open ocean. When these conditions are met, horizontal erosion occurs at a rate based on site-specific data.
- **Overwash:** Barrier islands of under 500 meters width are assumed to undergo overwash during each 25-year time-step due to storms. Beach migration and transport of sediments are calculated.
- **Saturation:** Coastal swamps and fresh marshes can migrate onto adjacent uplands as a response of the fresh water table to rising sea level close to the coast.

- **Accretion:** Sea level rise is offset by sedimentation and vertical accretion using average or site-specific values for each wetland category. Accretion rates may be spatially variable within a given model domain.

SLAMM Version 5.0 is the latest version of the SLAMM Model, developed in 2006/2007 and based on SLAMM 4.0. SLAMM 5.0 provides the following refinements:

- The capability to simulate fixed levels of sea-level rise by 2100 in case IPCC estimates of sea-level rise prove to be too conservative;
- Additional model categories such as "Inland Shore," "Irregularly Flooded (Brackish) Marsh," and "Tidal Swamp."
- *Optional.* In a defined estuary, salt marsh, brackish marsh, and tidal fresh marsh can migrate based on changes in salinity, using a simple though geographically-realistic salt wedge model. This optional model was not used when creating results for Matlacha Pass National Wildlife Refuge.

Model results presented in this report were produced using SLAMM version 5.0.1 which was released in early 2008 based on only minor refinements to the original SLAMM 5.0 model. Specifically, the accretion rates for swamps were modified based on additional literature review. For a thorough accounting of SLAMM model processes and the underlying assumptions and equations, please see the SLAMM 5.0.1 technical documentation (Clough and Park, 2008). This document is available at http://warrenpinnacle.com/prof/SLAMM

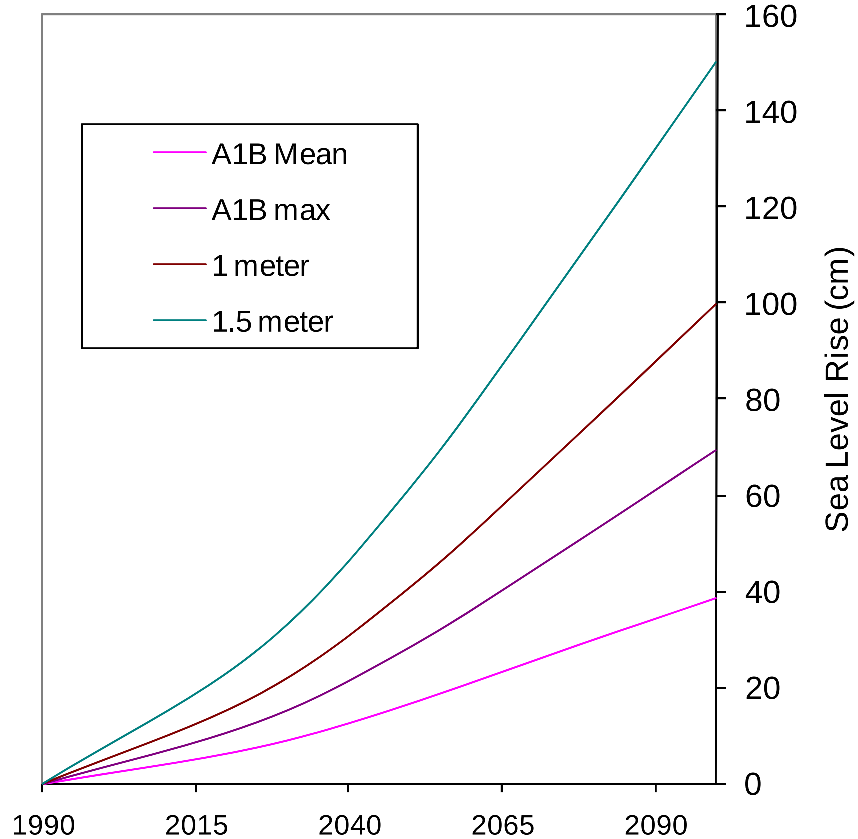
Sea-Level Rise Scenarios

The primary set of eustatic (global) sea level rise scenarios used within SLAMM was derived from the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2001). SLAMM 5 was run using the following IPCC and fixed-rate scenarios:

Scenario	Eustatic SLR by 2025 (cm)	Eustatic SLR by 2050 (cm)	Eustatic SLR by 2075 (cm)	Eustatic SLR by 2100 (cm)
A1B Mean	8	17	28	39
A1B Max	14	30	49	69
1 meter	13	28	48	100
1.5 meter	18	41	70	150

Recent literature (Chen et al., 2006, Monaghan et al., 2006) indicates that the eustatic rise in sea levels is progressing more rapidly than was previously assumed, perhaps due to the dynamic changes in ice flow omitted within the IPCC report's calculations. A recent paper in the journal *Science* (Rahmstorf, 2007) suggests that, taking into account possible model error, a feasible range by 2100 might be 50 to 140 cm. To allow for flexibility when interpreting the results, SLAMM was also run assuming 1 meter, 1½ meters of eustatic sea-level rise by the year 2100. The A1B- maximum scenario was scaled up to produce these bounding scenarios (Figure 1).

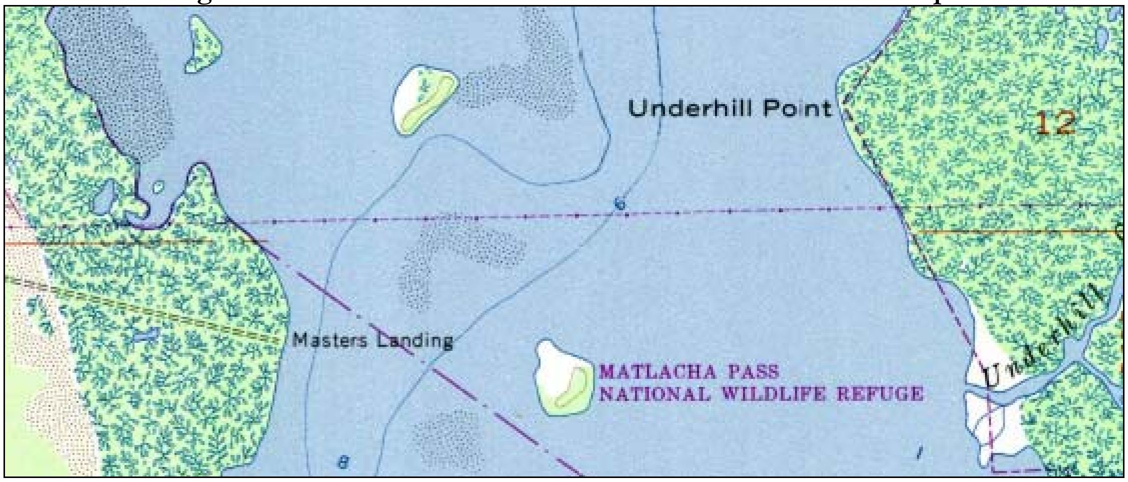
Figure 1: Summary of SLR Scenarios Utilized

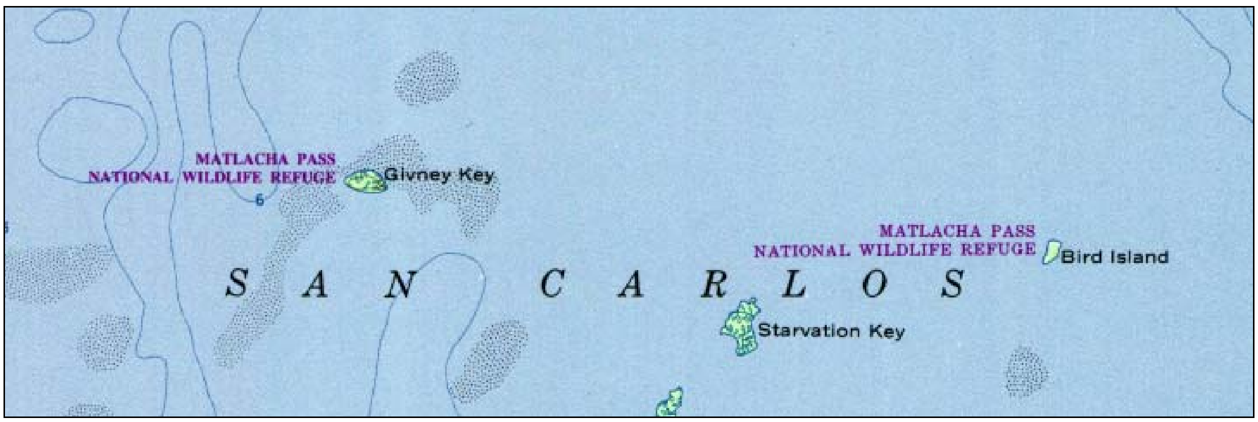


Methods and Data Sources

No high-resolution LIDAR data were found for Matlacha Pass NWR so elevation data are based on the National Elevation Dataset (NED). An examination of the metadata of the NED indicates that the data were derived from a 1958 survey illustrated in the USGS topographic map shown below. The contour intervals that resulted from this survey are five feet. The process of creating a digital elevation map (DEM) from a contour map does attempt to interpolate between contour lines but there is uncertainty in this process.

Figure 2: Two Details of Matlacha Pass NWR from USGS Map.





Examining the USGS map for Matlacha Pass, the refuge generally occurs below the five foot contour which increases the uncertainty for model simulations.

The National Wetlands Inventory for Matlacha Pass NWR is based on a photo date of 1972. This survey, when converted to 30 meter cells, suggests that at that time, the approximately 567 acre refuge was composed primarily of mangroves with a small amount of salt marsh and dry land (table below). Model predictions of effects due to sea level rise are run forward from 1972 as this was the date of the wetlands survey for this site.

Matlacha Pass NWI Survey	
Mangrove	75.5%
Trans. Salt Marsh	11.6%
Estuarine Open Water	9.8%
Dry Land	2.5%
Estuarine Beach	0.5%

The historic trend for Sea Level Rise was estimated at 2.4 mm/year based on long term trends measured at Fort Myers, Florida (NOAA station 8725520). Other long term trends measured within this vicinity include Naples FL (8725110) that has registered 2.02 mm/year.

The oceanic tide range was estimated at 0.577 meters using the average of the three closest NOAA stations, Punta Rassa, San Carlos Bay, FL (8725391), Pine Island, Charlotte Harbor, FL (8725528) and Bokellia, Charlotte Harbor, FL (8725541). The map vertical datum of NAVD88 was related to mean tide level using the average of data from Pine Island and Bokellia.

Within SLAMM, mangrove accretion is set to 7mm/year based on Cahoon et al. (1999) a study that used field measurements from Rookery Bay, FL. Other accretion rates were set to regional defaults.

Tidal flat erosion rates were set to 0.5 horizontal meters per year based on the effects of wave action. This is a default model value that has been used in previous SLAMM applications to Florida. No site-specific studies of horizontal erosion rates were located for this analysis.

Modeled U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge boundaries are based on Approved Acquisition Boundaries as received from Kimberly Eldridge, lead cartographer with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and are current as of June, 2008. Paul Tritaik, the Wildlife Refuge Manager for this refuge assisted in providing technical contacts and also indicated that he did not know of additional higher-resolution data sets to assist in this analysis.

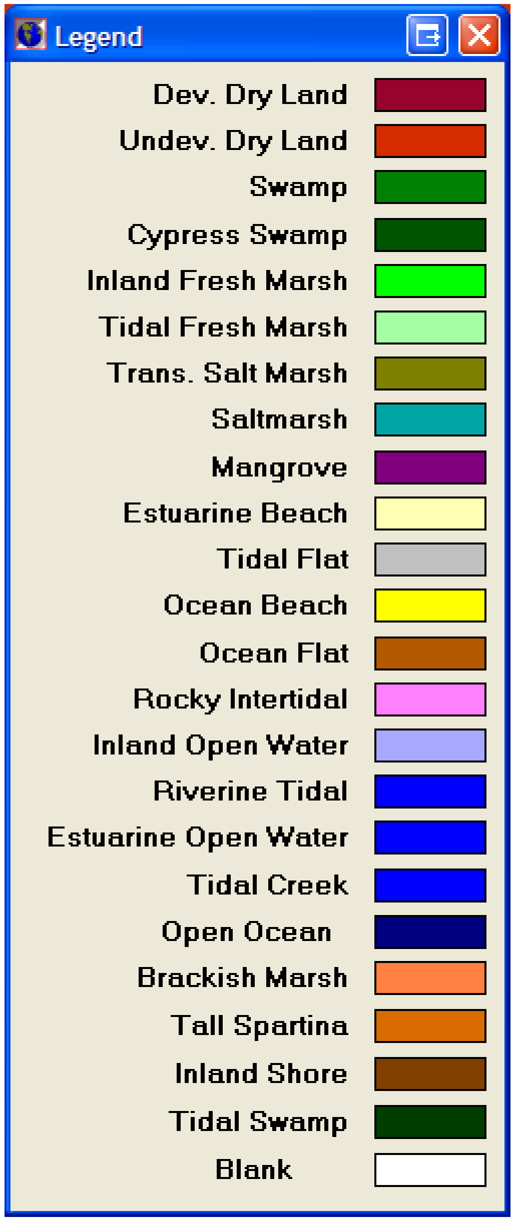
The cell-size used for this analysis was 30 meter by 30 meter cells. However, the SLAMM model does track partial conversion of cells based on elevation and slope.

SLAMM INPUT PARAMETERS FOR MATLACHA PASS

Site	**Matlacha Pass**
NED Source Date (yyyy)	1958
NWI_photo_date (yyyy)	1972
Direction_OffShore (N|S|E|W)	N
Historic_trend (mm/yr)	2.4
NAVD88_correction (MTL-NAVD88 in meters)	-0.204
Water Depth (m below MLW- N/A)	2
TideRangeOcean (meters: MHHW-MLLW)	0.577
TideRangeInland (meters)	0.577
Mean High Water Spring (m above MTL)	0.384
MHSW Inland (m above MTL)	0.384
Marsh Erosion (horz meters/year)	1.8
Swamp Erosion (horz meters/year)	1
TFlat Erosion (horz meters/year) [from 0.5]	0.5
Salt marsh vertical accretion (mm/yr) Final	3.9
Brackish March vert. accretion (mm/yr) Final	4.7
Tidal Fresh vertical accretion (mm/yr) Final	5.9
Beach/T.Flat Sedimentation Rate (mm/yr)	0.5
Frequency of Large Storms (yr/washover)	25
Use Elevation Preprocessor for Wetlands	TRUE

Results

Maps of SLAMM input and output to follow will use the following legend:

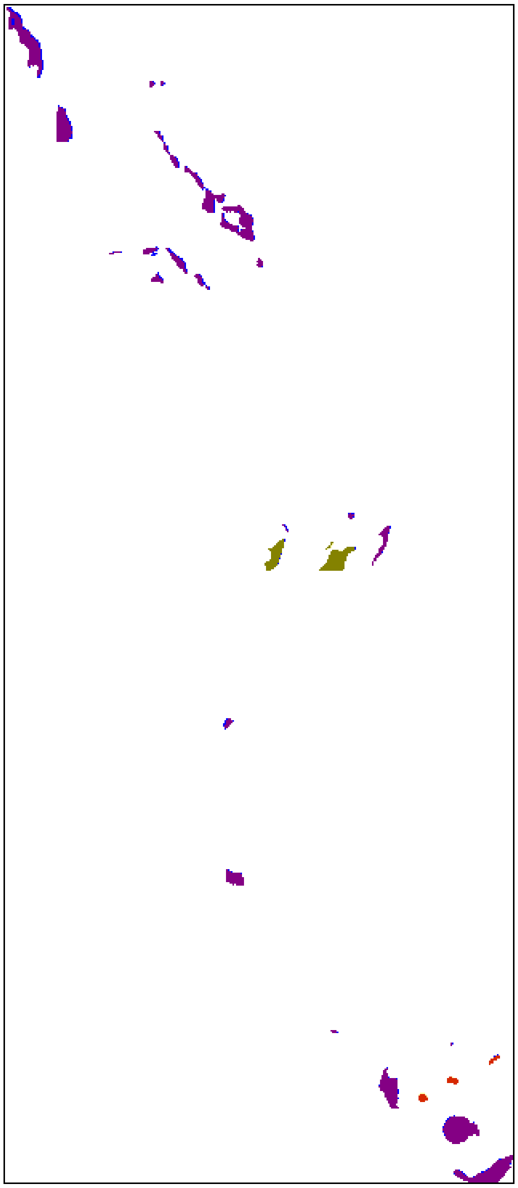


Within this simulation, dry lands in the Matlacha Pass NWR are quite vulnerable to even lower simulations of SLR. This result is subject to the uncertainty in the elevation data, however. A better analysis will be possible using LiDAR data when coastal FL LiDAR data becomes available (LIDAR data are currently being gathered for all of coastal Florida through the Florida Division of Emergency Management but at this time, this remains a work in progress.)

Matlacha Pass
IPCC Scenario A1B-Mean, 0.39 M SLR Eustatic by 2100

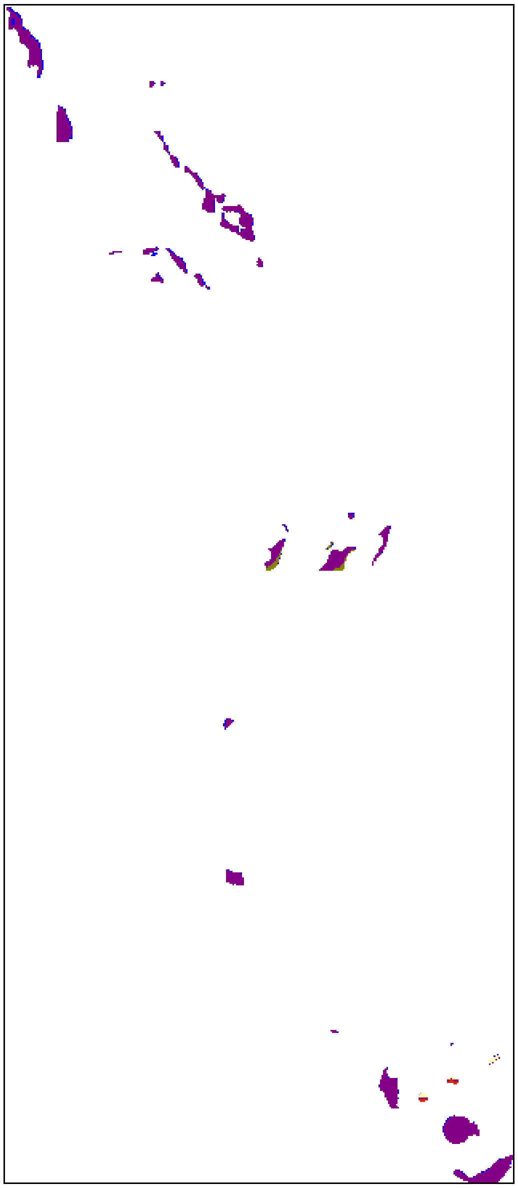
Results in Acres

	Initial	2025	2050	2075	2100
Mangrove	428.3	479.8	482.8	496.9	499.7
Trans. Salt Marsh	65.8	14.1	14.0	2.1	0.6
Estuarine Open Water	55.8	56.1	56.8	57.7	60.5
Dry Land	14.5	7.7	4.7	1.7	0.0
Estuarine Beach	2.9	8.8	8.1	6.9	1.8
Tidal Flat	0.0	0.8	0.9	1.9	4.7
Total (incl. water)	**567.3**	**567.3**	**567.3**	**567.3**	**567.3**

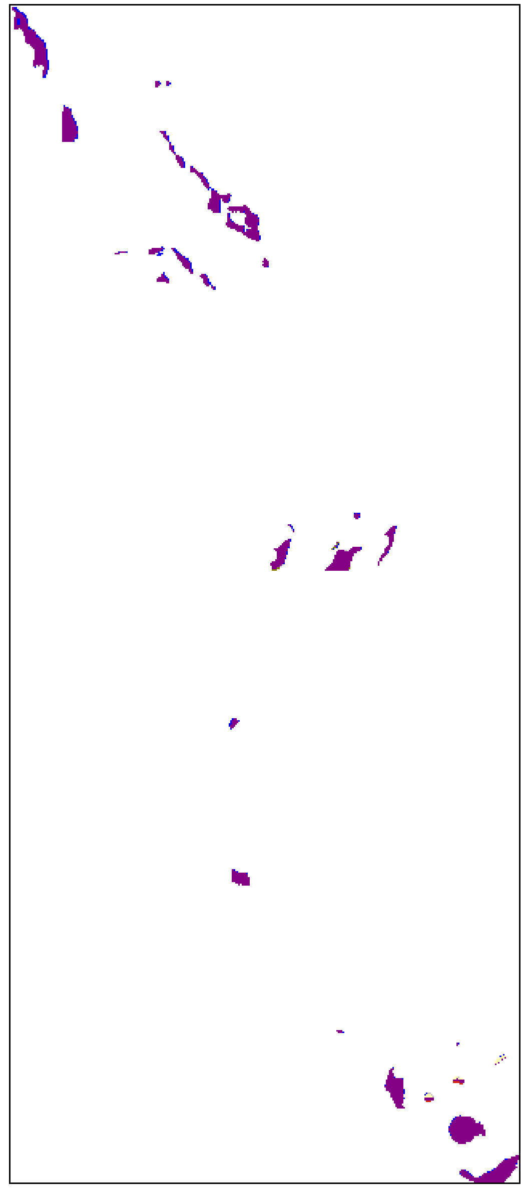


Matlacha Pass NWR, Initial Condition

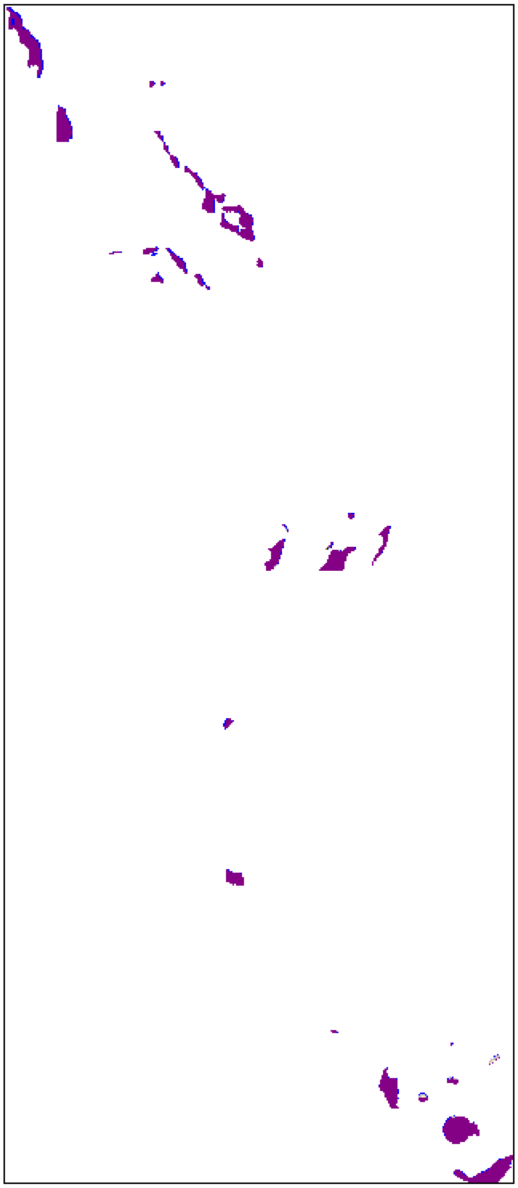
Matlacha Pass NWR, 2025, Scenario A1B Mean



Matlacha Pass NWR, 2050, Scenario A1B Mean



Matlacha Pass NWR, 2075, Scenario A1B Mean

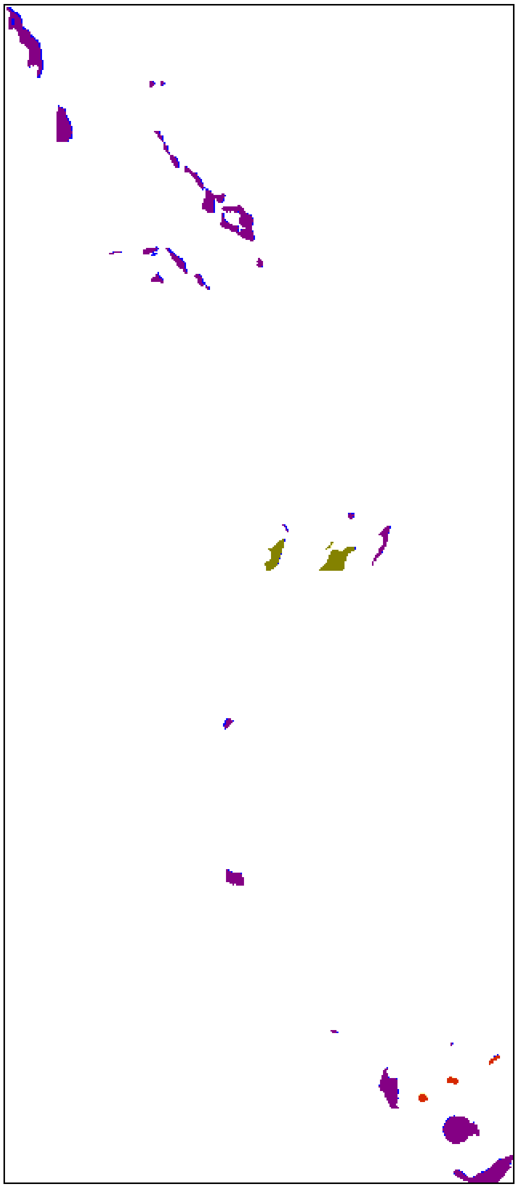


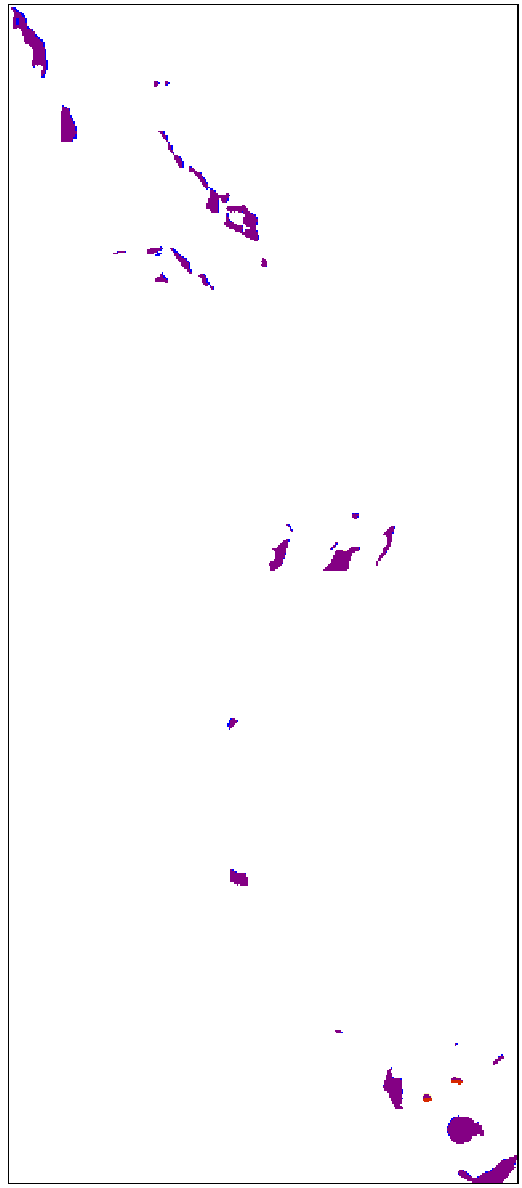
Matlacha Pass NWR, 2100, Scenario A1B Mean

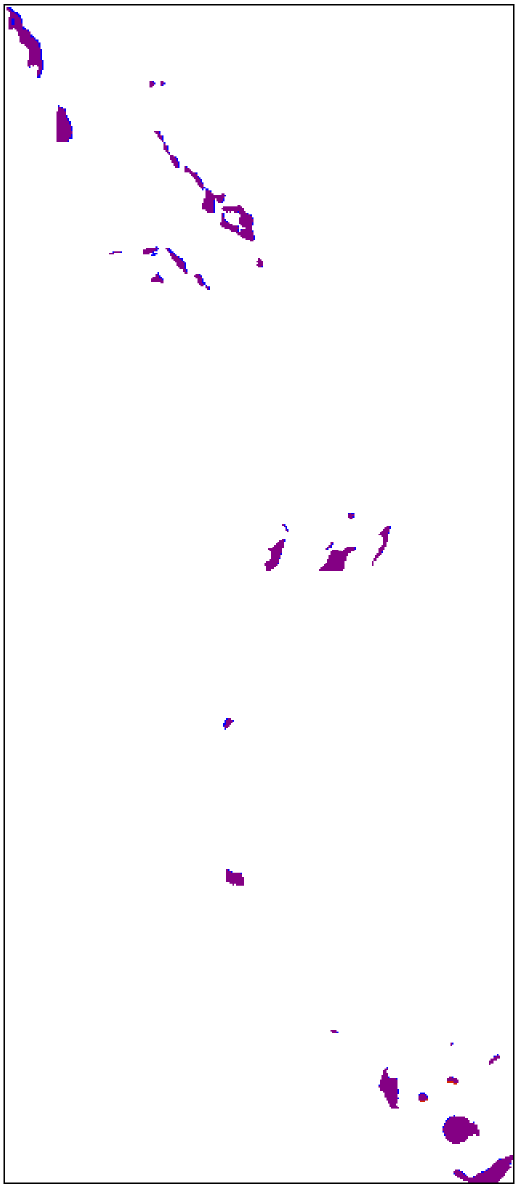
Matlacha Pass
IPCC Scenario A1B-Max, 0.69 M SLR Eustatic by 2100

Results in Acres

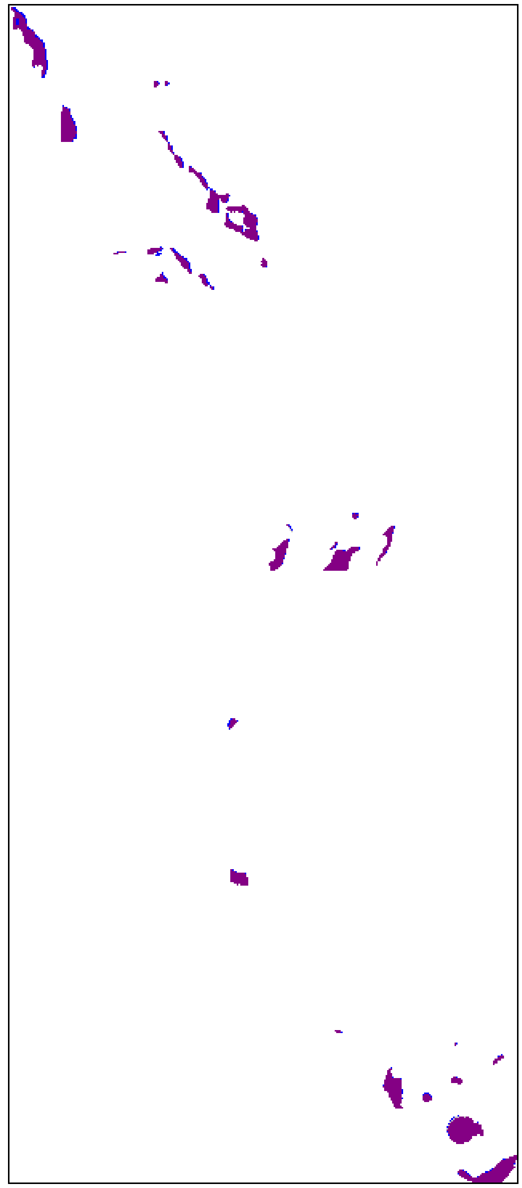
	Initial	2025	2050	2075	2100
Mangrove	428.3	502.4	506.5	506.6	506.2
Trans. Salt Marsh	65.8	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Estuarine Open Water	55.8	56.5	58.0	58.7	60.1
Dry Land	14.5	6.1	2.1	0.0	0.0
Estuarine Beach	2.9	1.8	0.3	0.0	0.0
Tidal Flat	0.0	0.4	0.5	2.0	1.1
Total (incl. water)	**567.3**	**567.3**	**567.3**	**567.3**	**567.3**


Matlacha Pass NWR, Initial Condition

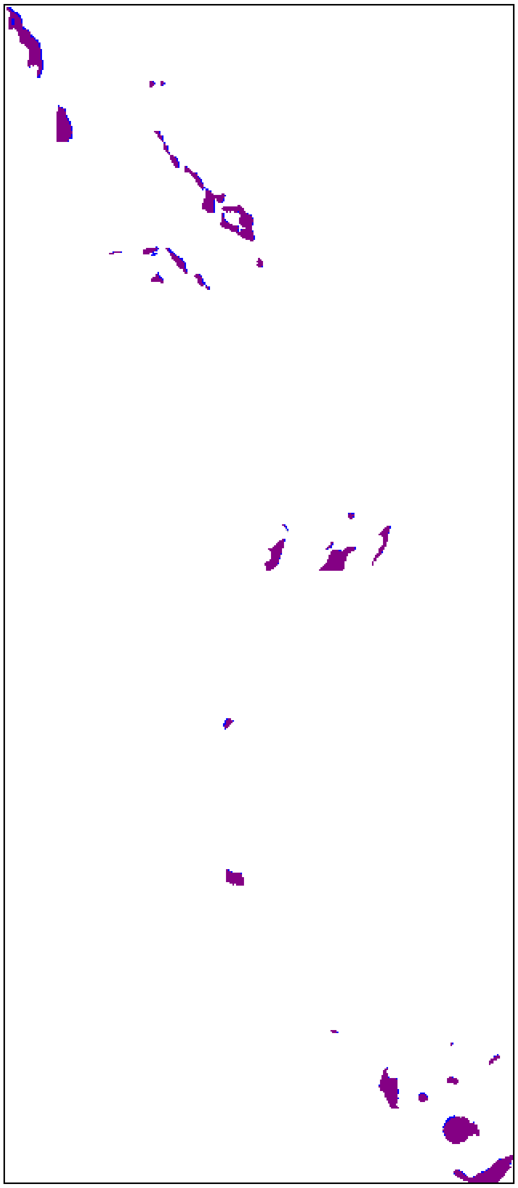

Matlacha Pass NWR, 2025, Scenario A1B Maximum



Matlacha Pass NWR, 2050, Scenario A1B Maximum



Matlacha Pass NWR, 2075, Scenario A1B Maximum

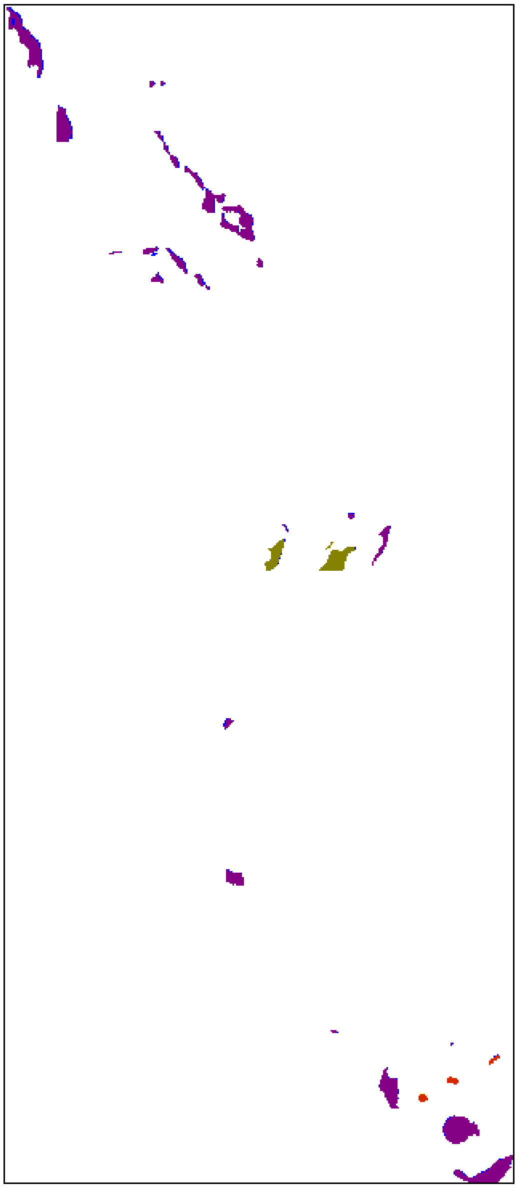


Matlacha Pass NWR, 2100, Scenario A1B Maximum

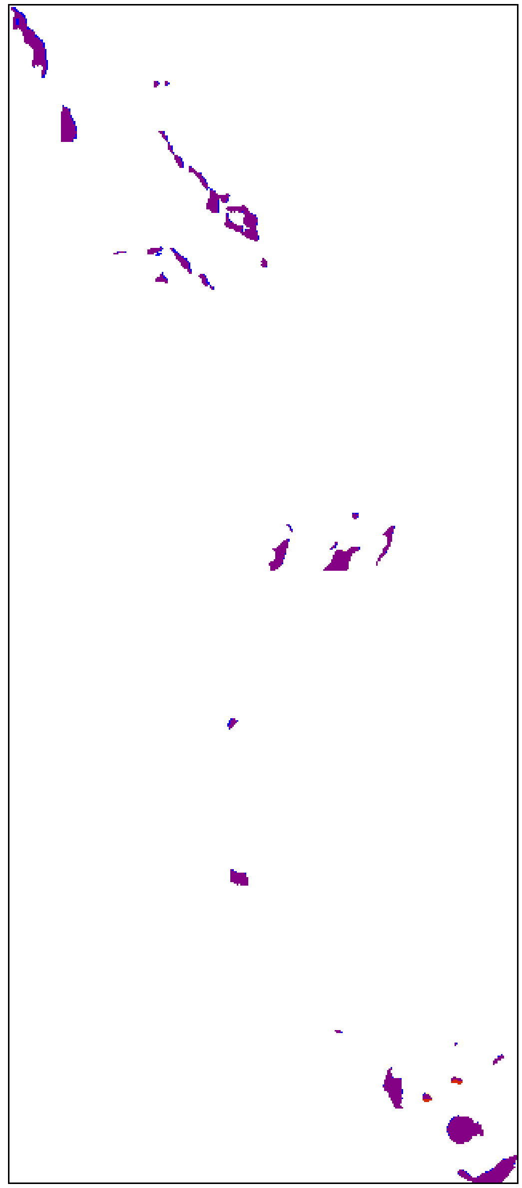
Matlacha Pass
1 Meter Eustatic SLR by 2100

Results in Acres

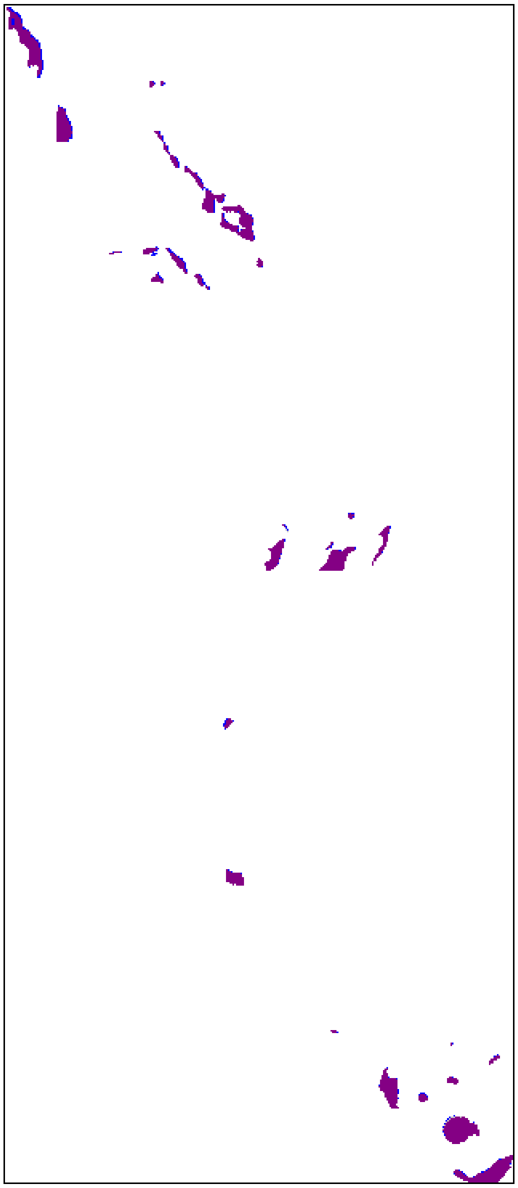
	Initial	2025	2050	2075	2100
Mangrove	428.3	503.8	506.6	506.2	154.9
Trans. Salt Marsh	65.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Estuarine Open Water	55.8	57.2	58.7	60.8	412.2
Dry Land	14.5	4.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Estuarine Beach	2.9	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tidal Flat	0.0	0.1	2.0	0.4	0.3
Total (incl. water)	**567.3**	**567.3**	**567.3**	**567.3**	**567.3**



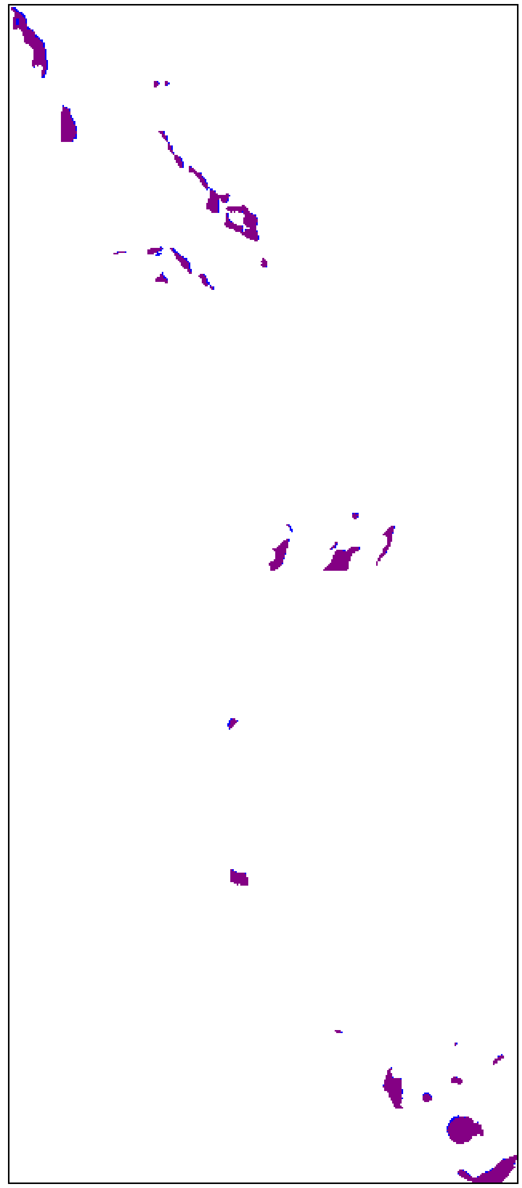
Matlacha Pass NWR, Initial Condition



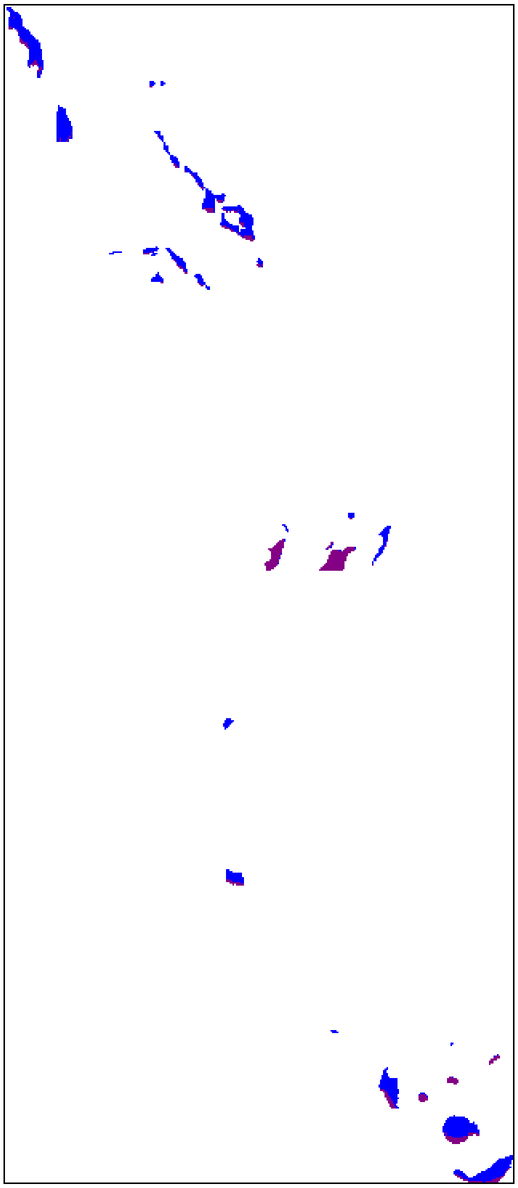
Matlacha Pass NWR, 2025, 1 meter eustatic SLR by 2100



Matlacha Pass NWR, 2050, 1 meter eustatic SLR by 2100



Matlacha Pass NWR, 2075, 1 meter eustatic SLR by 2100

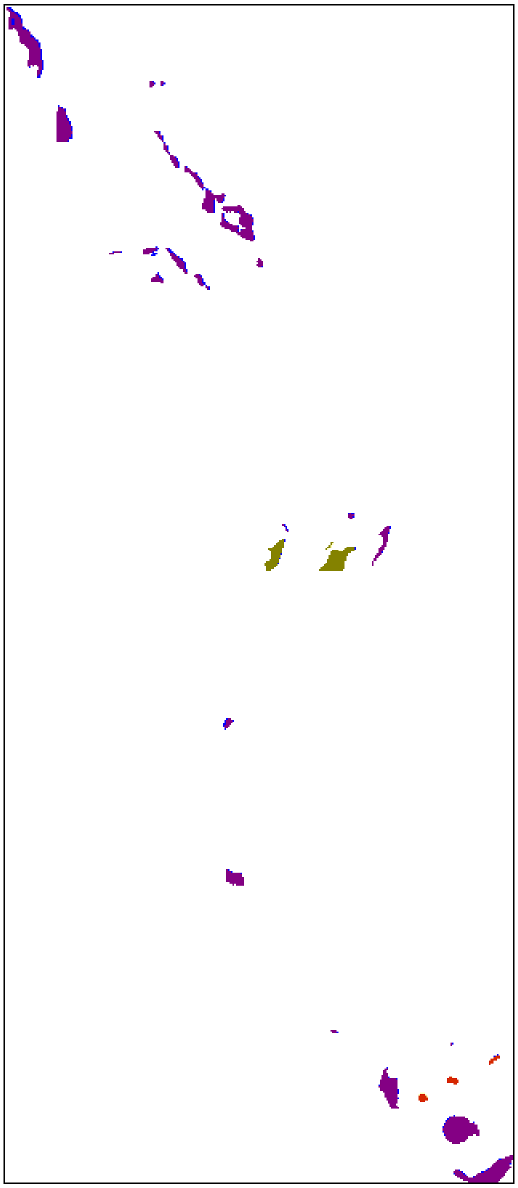


Matlacha Pass NWR, 2100, 1 meter eustatic SLR by 2100

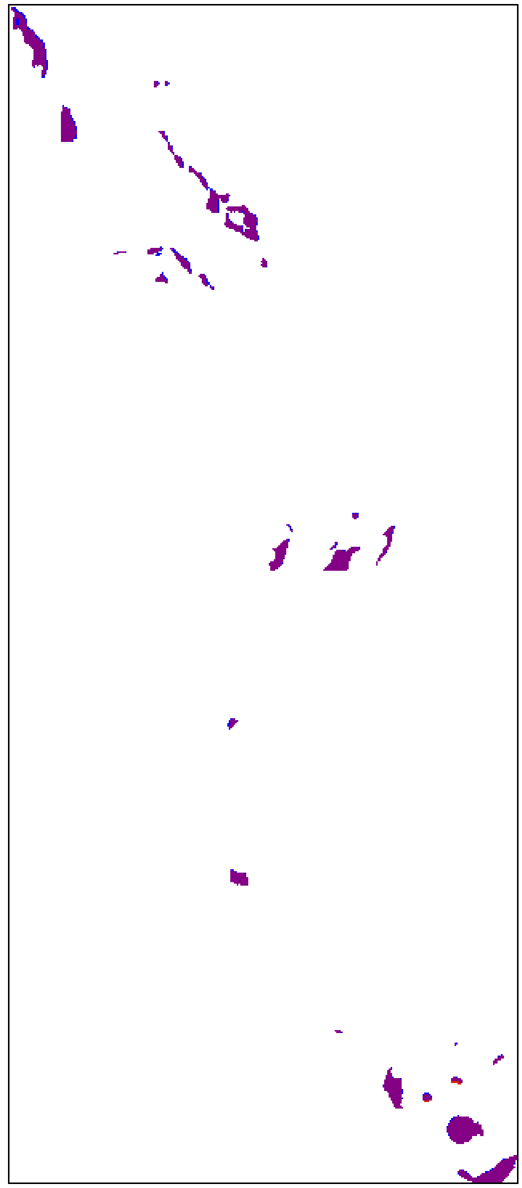
Matlacha Pass
1.5 Meters Eustatic SLR by 2100

Results in Acres

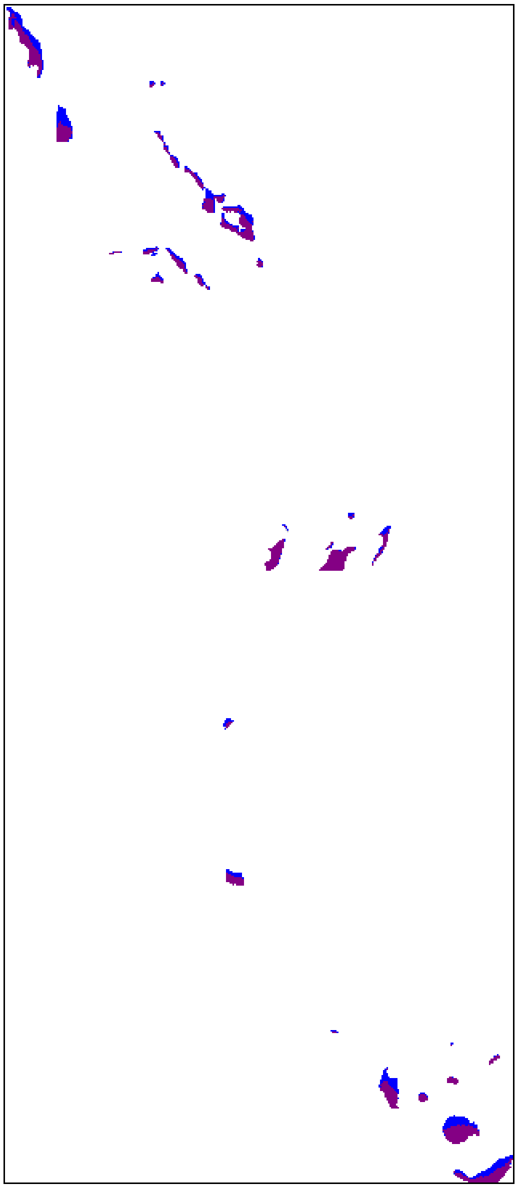
	Initial	2025	2050	2075	2100
Mangrove	428.3	505.9	365.9	7.9	0.0
Trans. Salt Marsh	65.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Estuarine Open Water	55.8	58.3	200.9	559.4	567.3
Dry Land	14.5	2.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Estuarine Beach	2.9	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tidal Flat	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0
Total (incl. water)	**567.3**	**567.3**	**567.3**	**567.3**	**567.3**



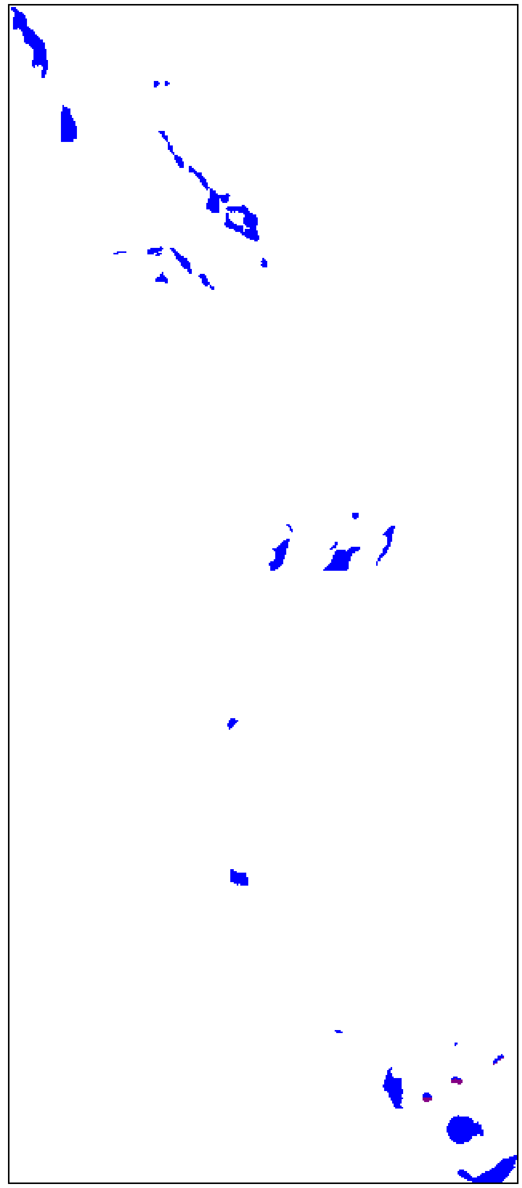
Matlacha Pass NWR, Initial Condition



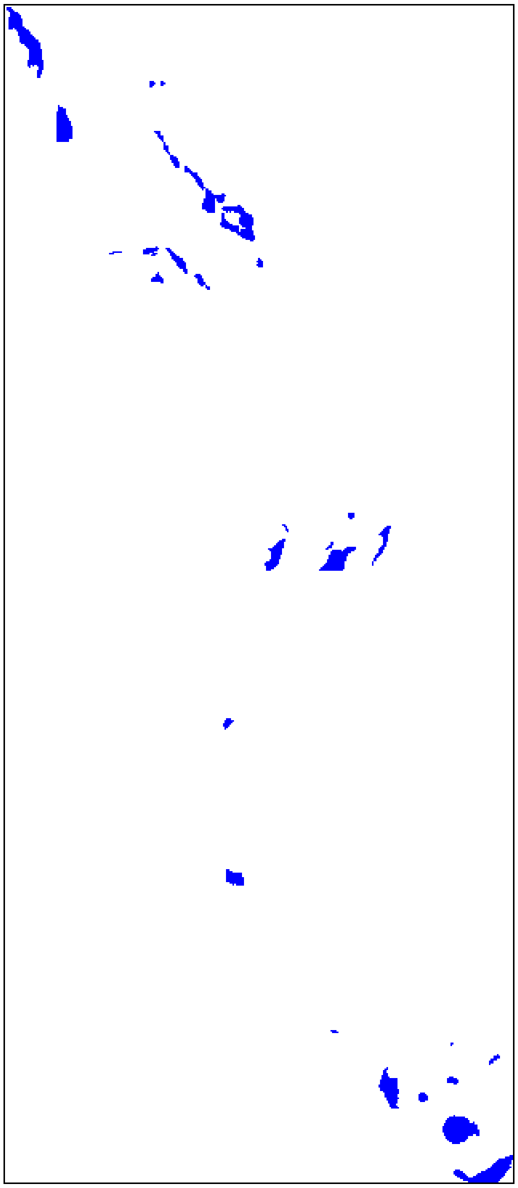
Matlacha Pass NWR, 2025, 1.5 meters eustatic SLR by 2100



Matlacha Pass NWR, 2050, 1.5 meters eustatic SLR by 2100



Matlacha Pass NWR, 2075, 1.5 meters eustatic SLR by 2100



Matlacha Pass NWR, 2100, 1.5 meters eustatic SLR by 2100

Discussion:

For this site, mangroves are predicted to be vulnerable only when the relative sea level rise exceeds 0.69 meters by 2100. Once sea level rise exceeds predicted mangrove accretion rates (7mm/year), mangroves are predicted to quickly succumb. Precisely where this break-point exists within the spectrum of sea-level rise scenarios is uncertain, especially because modeled mangrove accretion rates were based on regional, not site-specific measurements.

Elevation data are of relatively low quality at this site, based on five foot contour intervals. An improvement to these data will significantly decrease uncertainty as to the vulnerability of dry lands. Currently dry lands are predicted to be quite vulnerable as discussed in the "Results" section above.

Estuarine beach is predicted to be lost by 2100 under the lowest scenario run (0.39 meters of SLR by 2100) but this beach disappears much more quickly under higher SLR scenarios. Scrub-shrub salt marsh is also predicted to be vulnerable, converting to mangrove forest under even lower scenarios of sea level rise.

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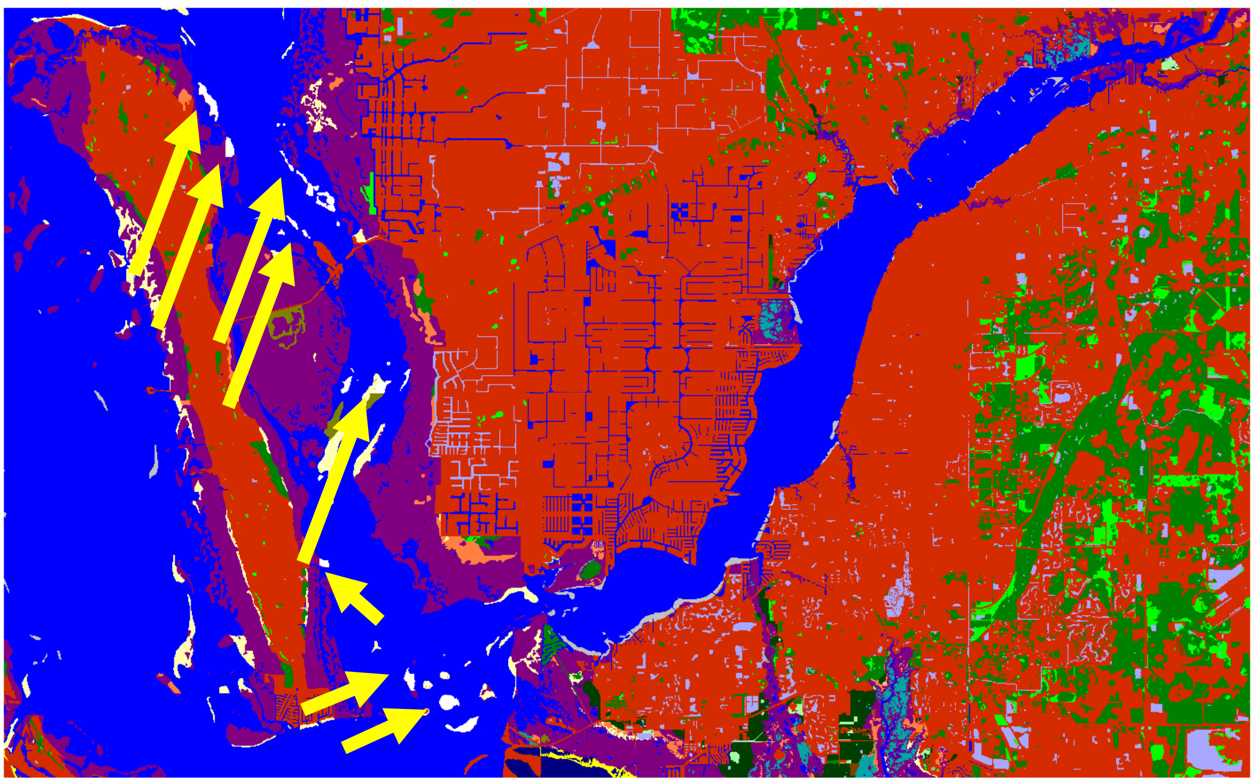
Appendix A: Contextual Results

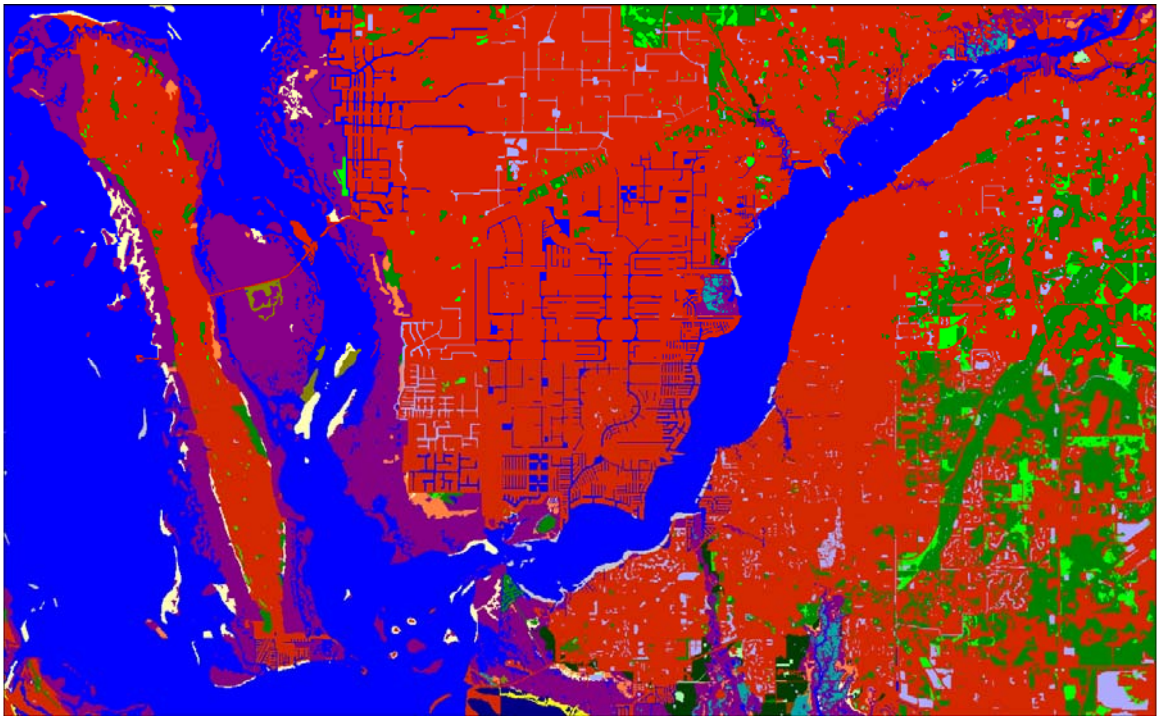
The SLAMM model does take into account the context of the surrounding lands or open water when calculating effects. For example, erosion rates are calculated based on the maximum fetch (wave action) which is estimated by assessing contiguous open water to a given marsh cell. Another example is that inundated dry lands will convert to marshes or ocean beach depending on their proximity to open ocean.

For this reason, an area larger than the boundaries of the USFWS refuge was modeled. These results maps are presented here with the following caveats:

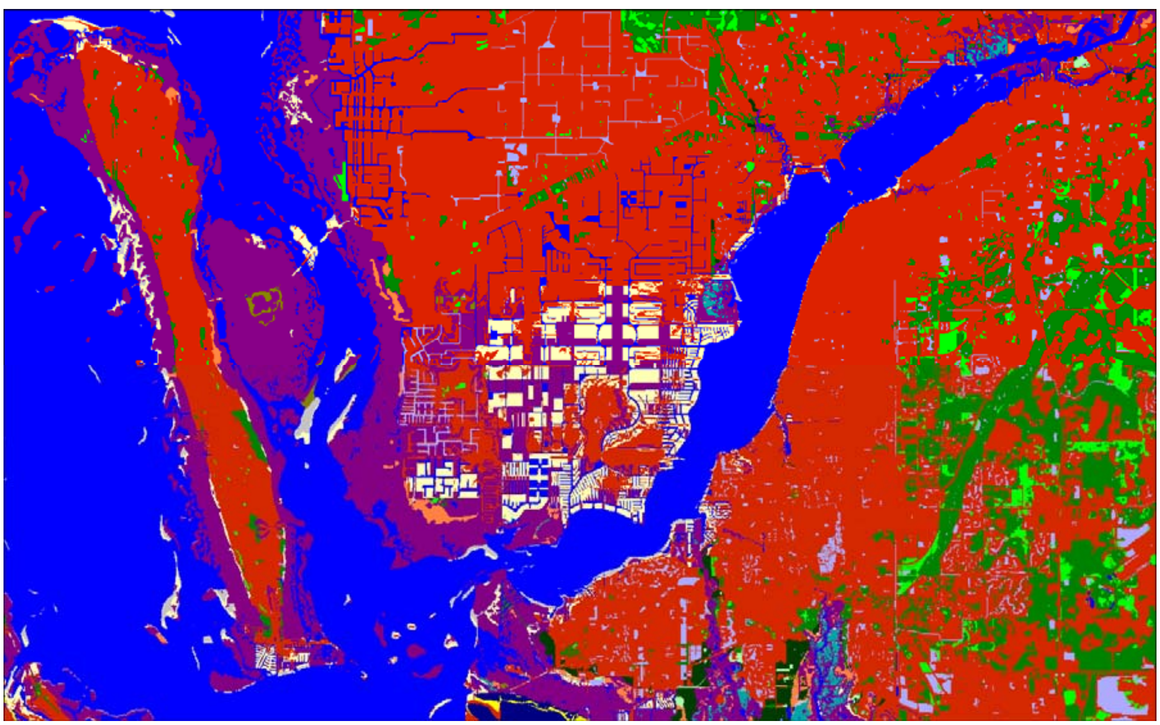
- Results were closely examined (quality assurance) within USFWS refuges but not closely examined for the larger region.
- Site-specific parameters for the model were derived for USFWS refuges whenever possible and may not be regionally applicable.
- Especially in areas where dikes are present, an effort was made to assess the probable location and effects of dikes for USFWS refuges, but this effort was not made for surrounding areas.



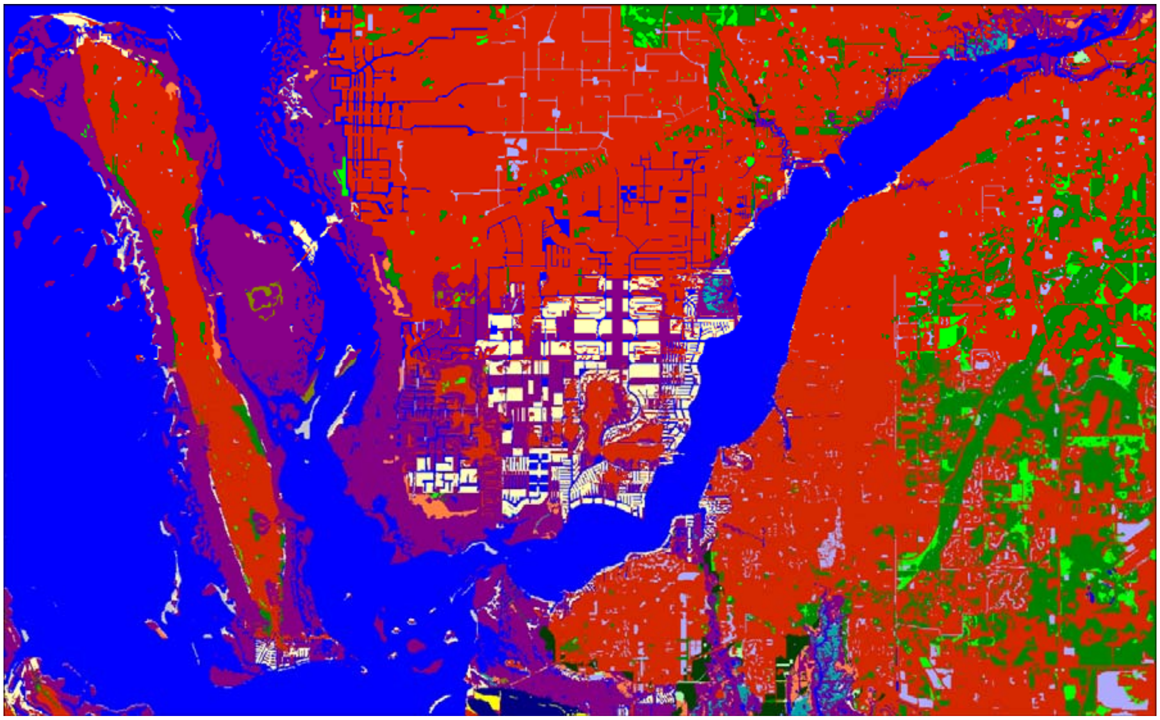
The approved acquisition Boundary for Matlacha Pass NWR is a series of small mangrove islands shown here in white and generally pointed at by the yellow arrows above.



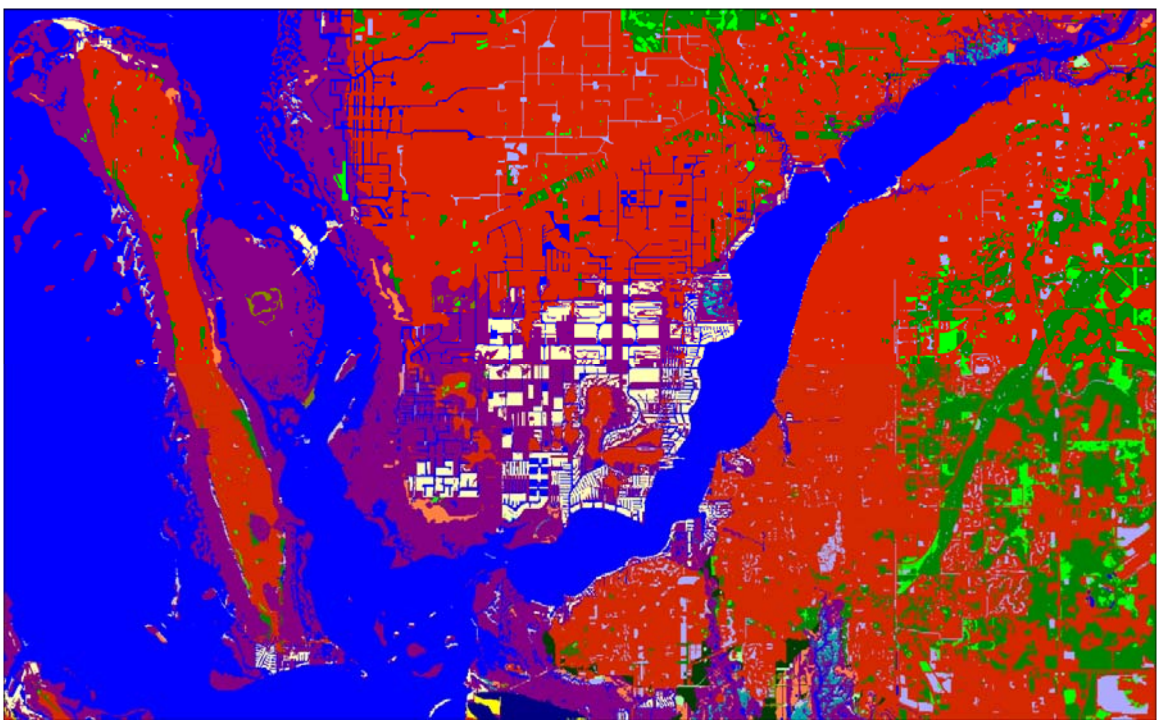
Matlacha Pass NWR, Initial Condition



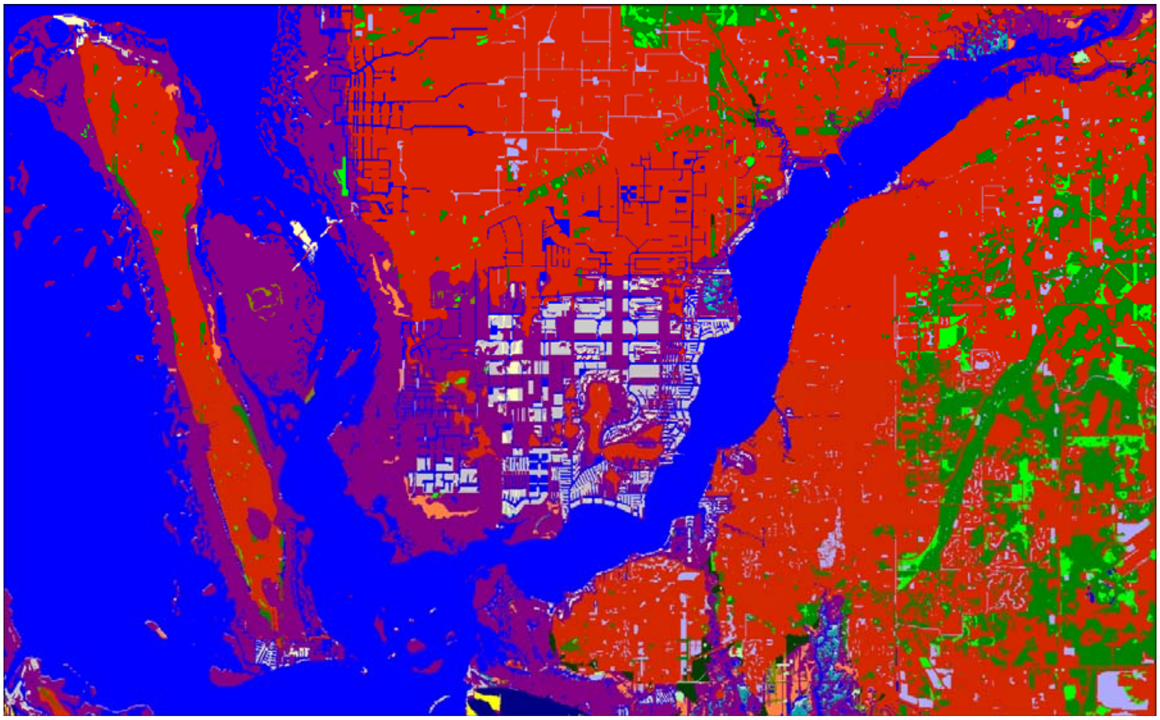
Matlacha Simulation Context, 2025, Scenario A1B Mean

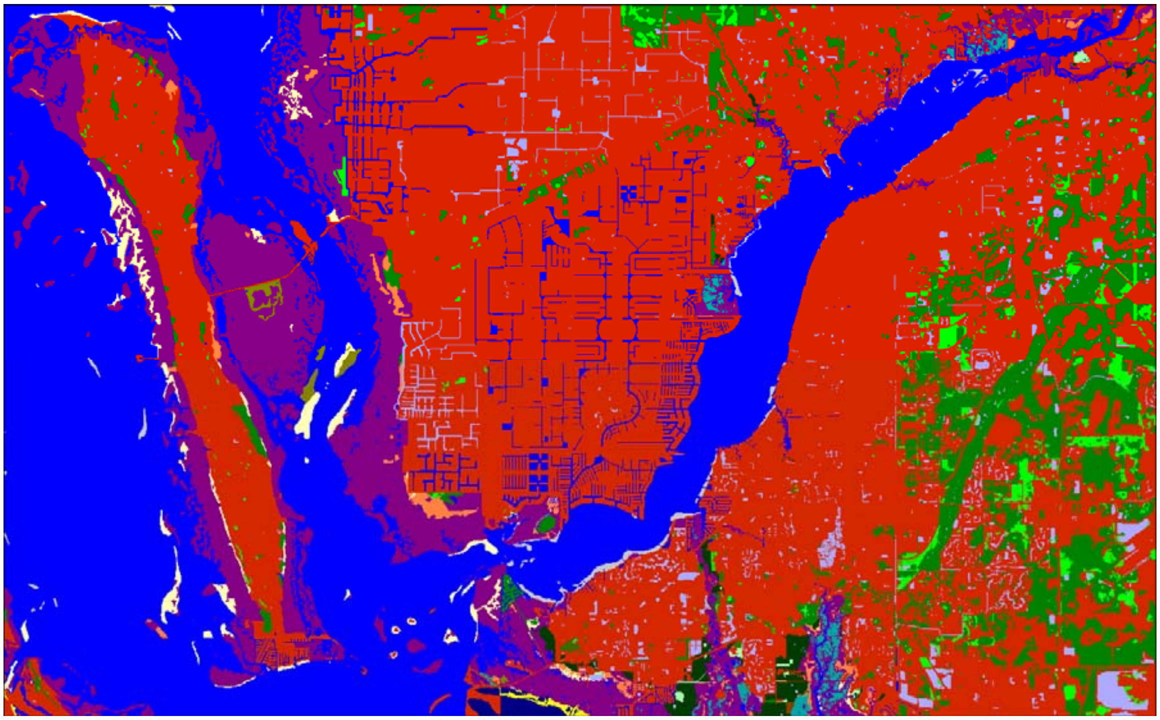


Matlacha Simulation Context, 2050, Scenario A1B Mean

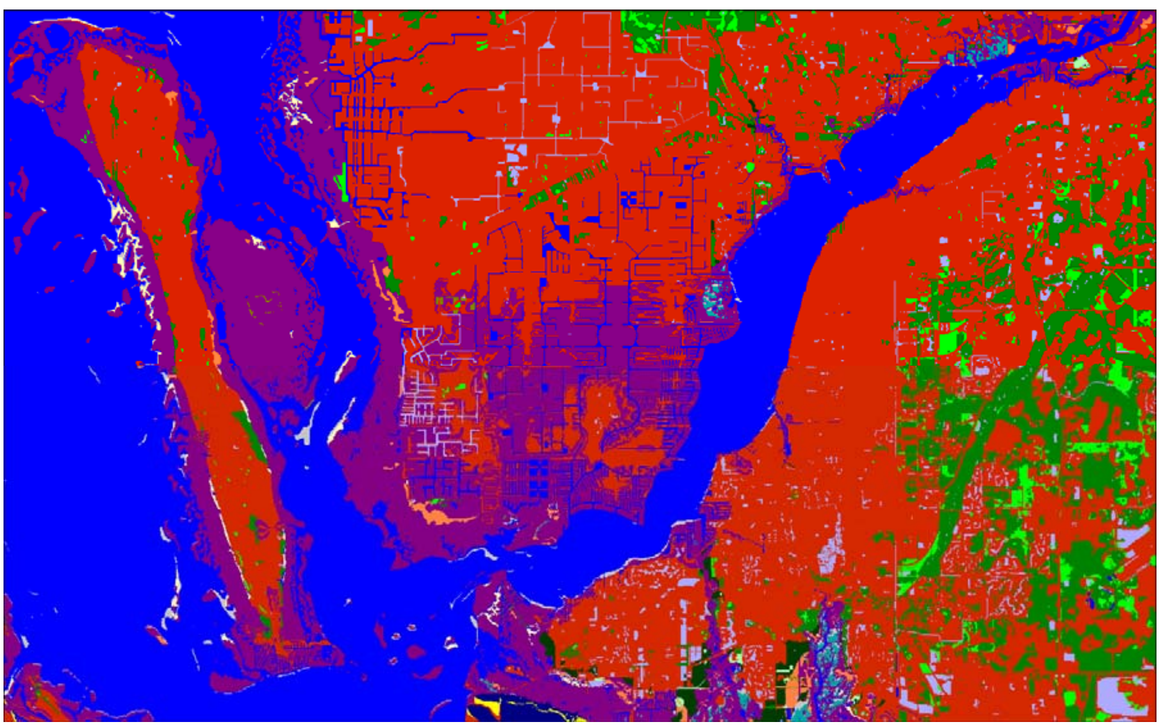


Matlacha Simulation Context, 2075, Scenario A1B Mean

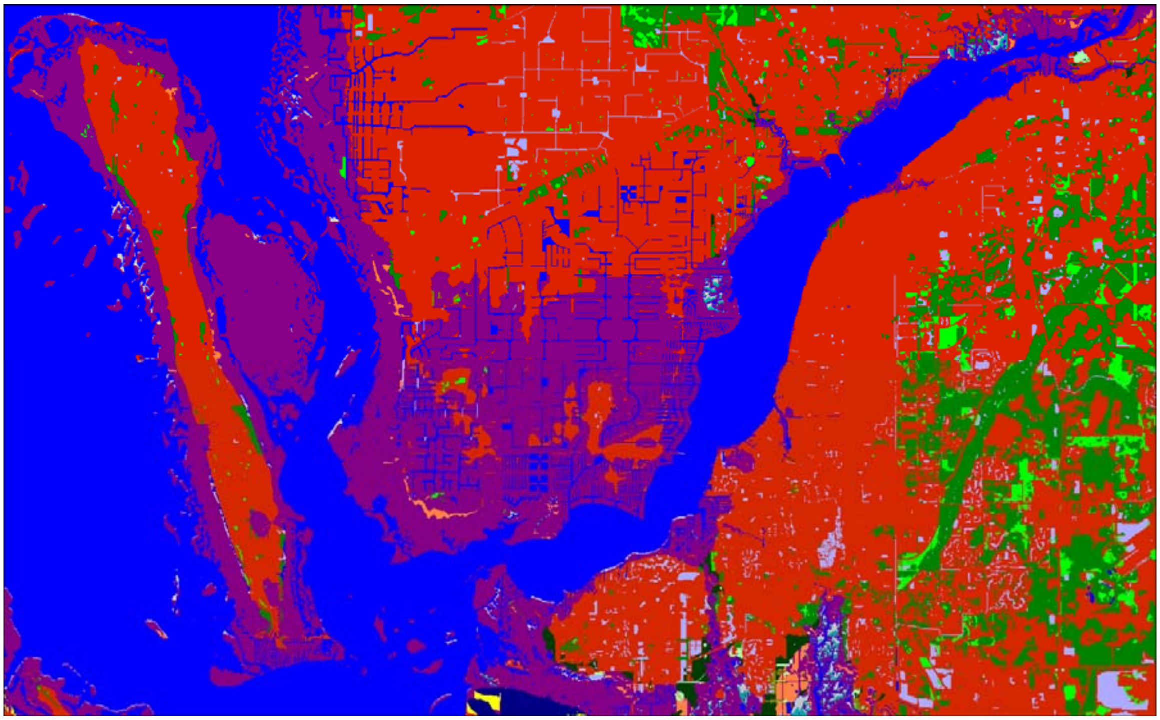

Matlacha Simulation Context, 2100, Scenario A1B Mean



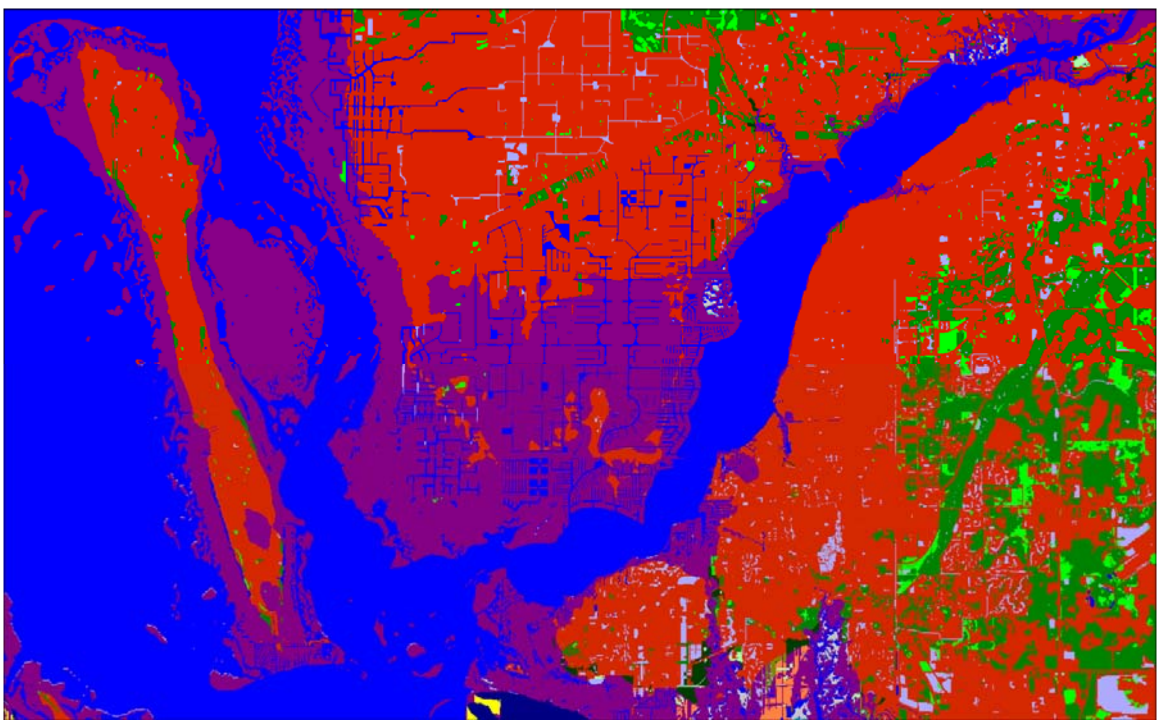
Matlacha Simulation Context, Initial Condition



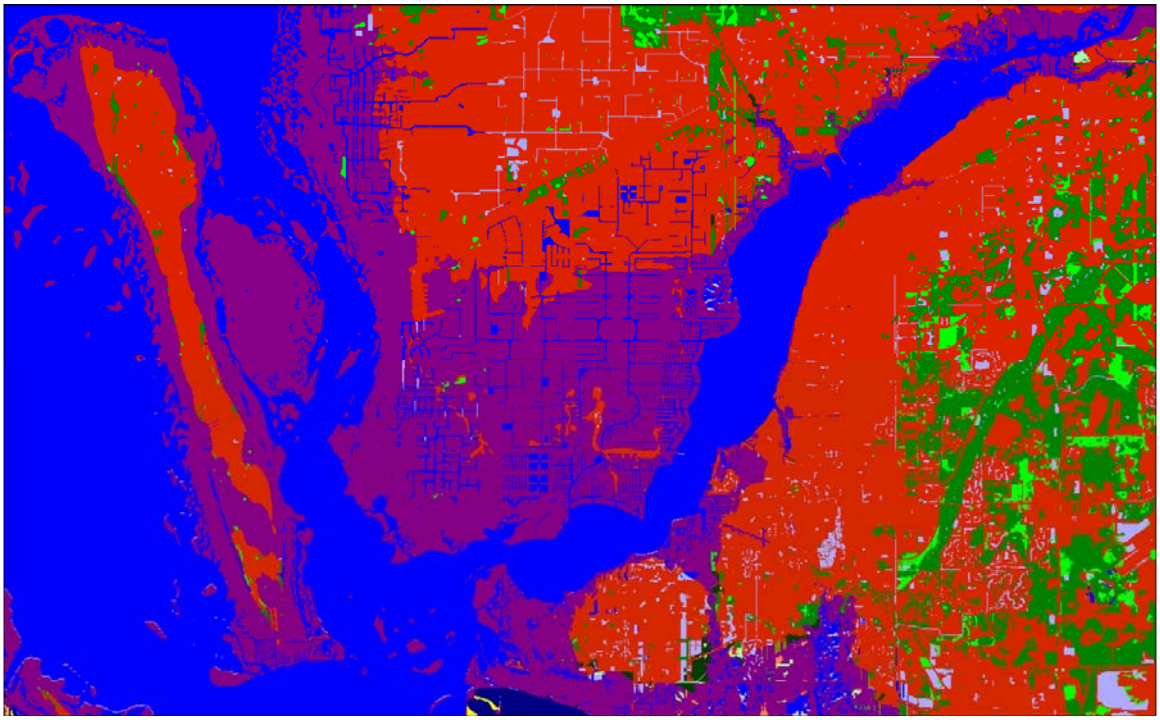
Matlacha Simulation Context, 2025, Scenario A1B Maximum



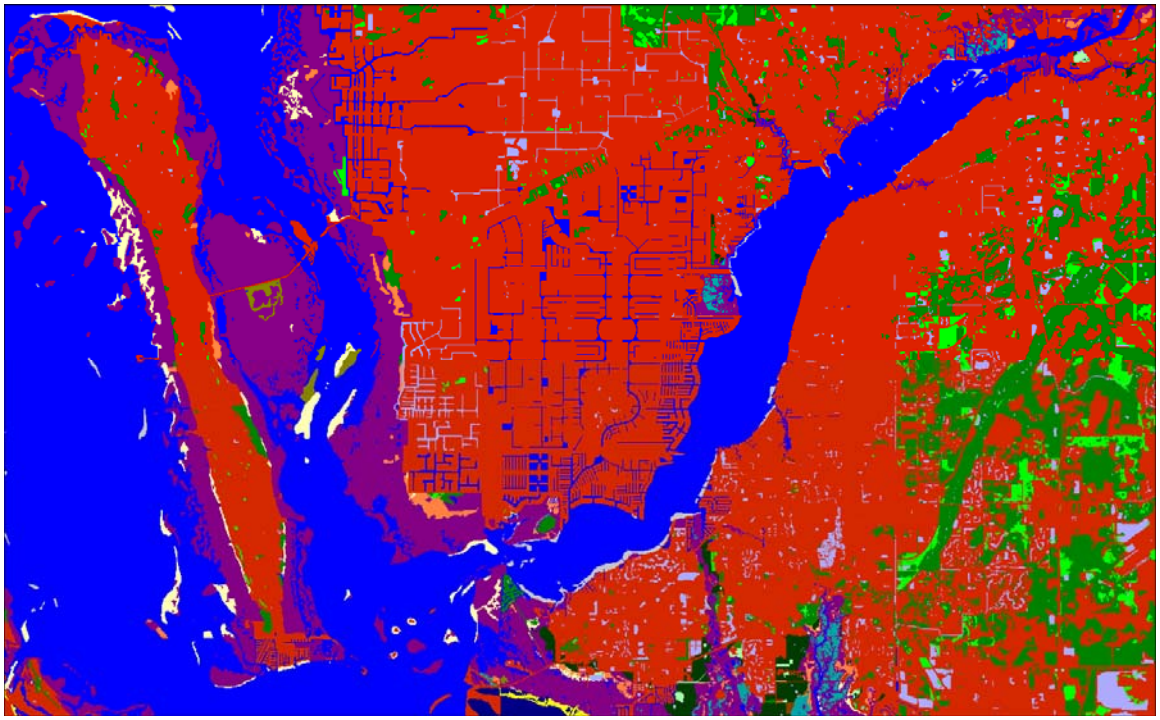
Matlacha Simulation Context, 2050, Scenario A1B Maximum



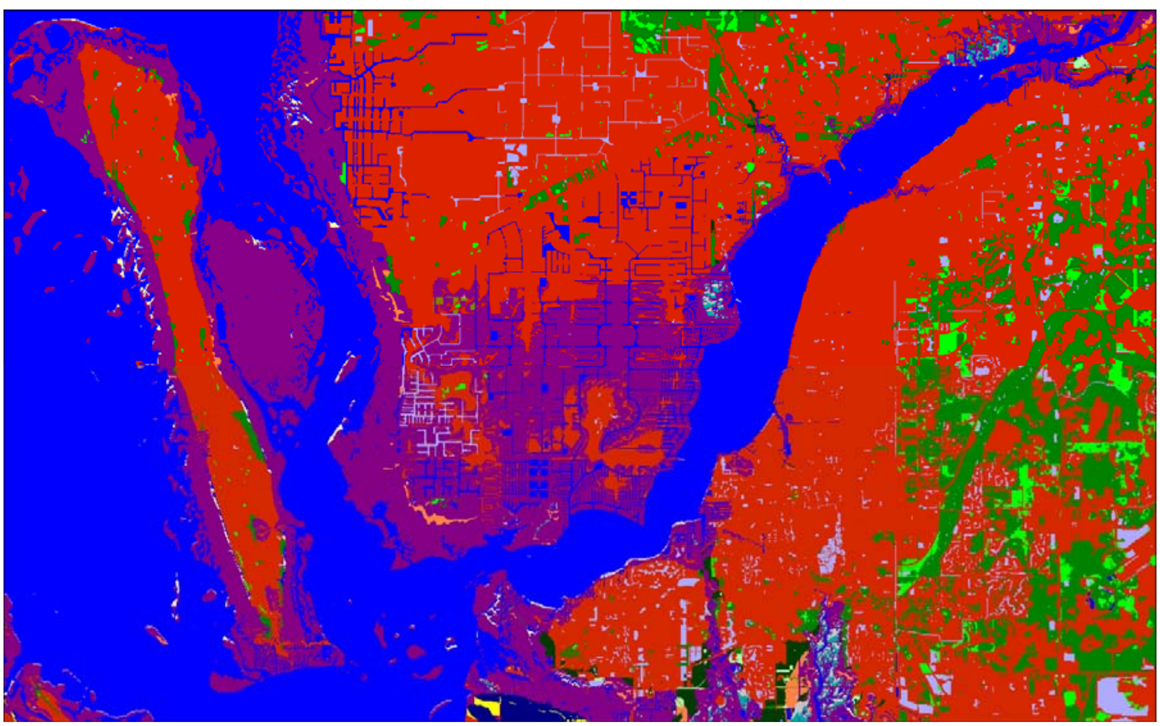
Matlacha Simulation Context, 2075, Scenario A1B Maximum



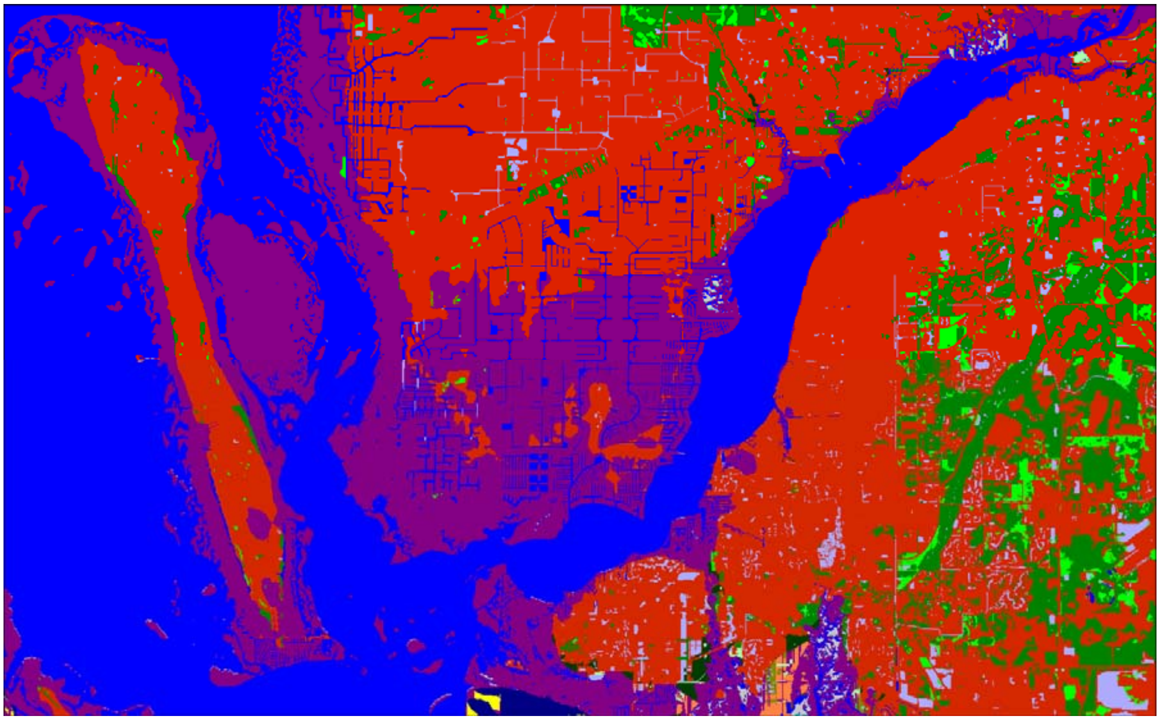
Matlacha Simulation Context, 2100, Scenario A1B Maximum



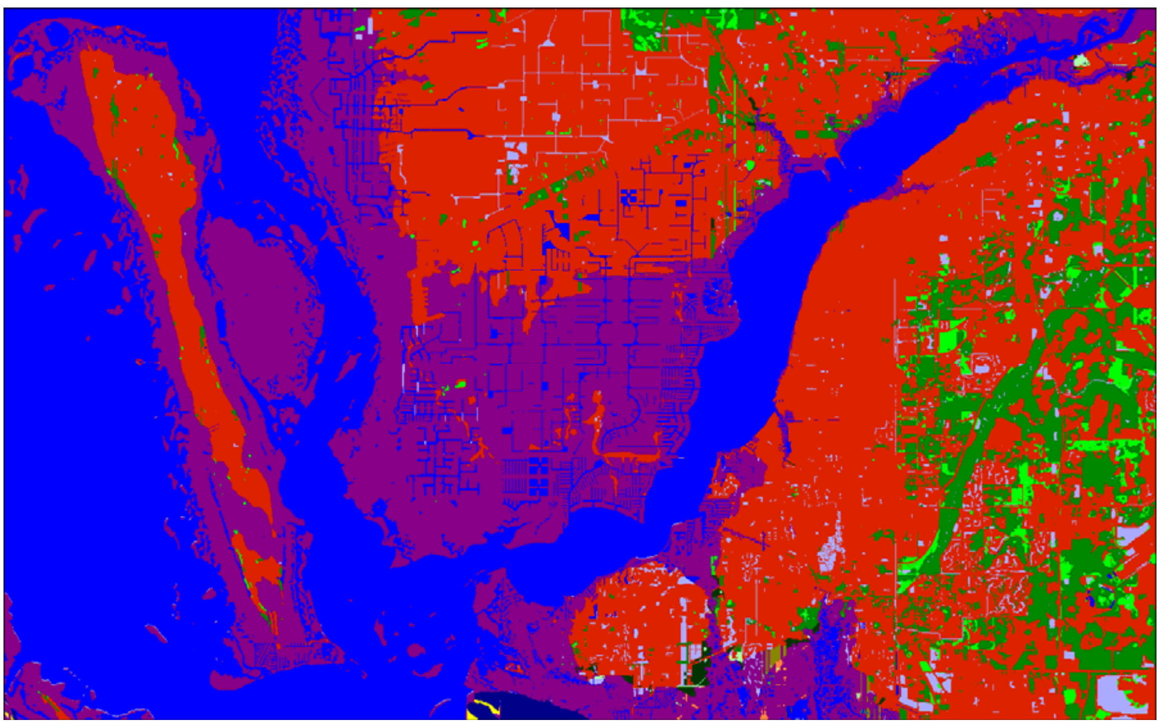
Matlacha Simulation Context, Initial Condition



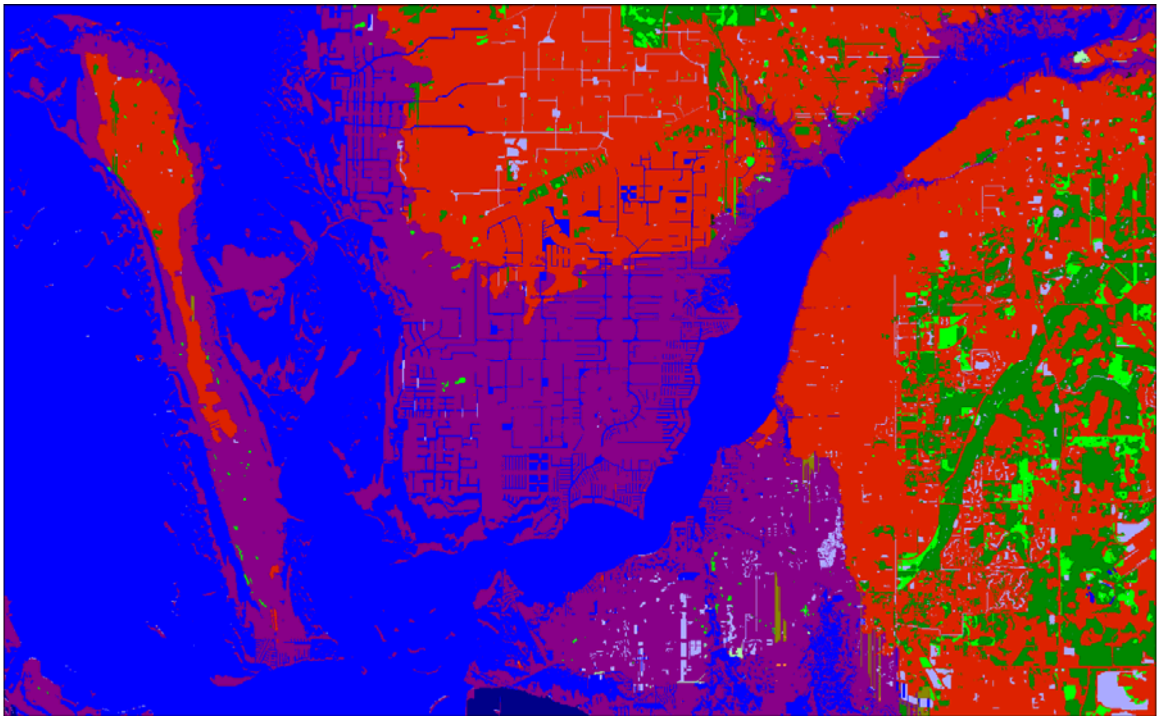
Matlacha Simulation Context, 2025, 1 meter eustatic SLR by 2100



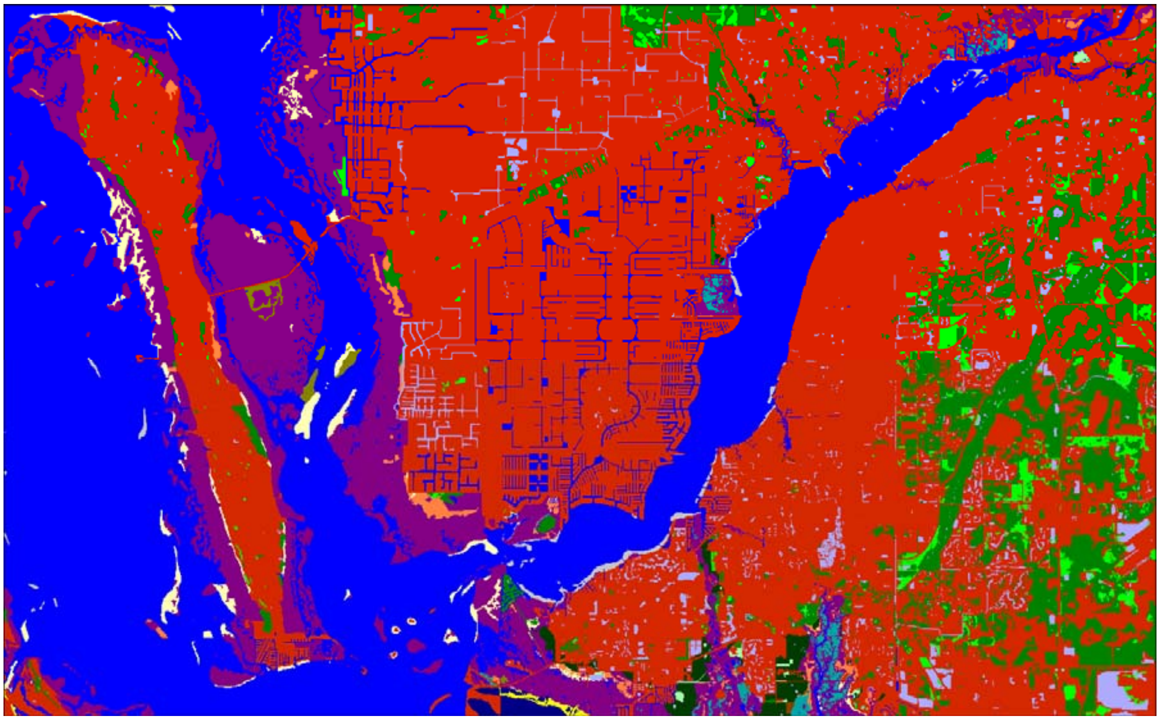
Matlacha Simulation Context, 2050, 1 meter eustatic SLR by 2100



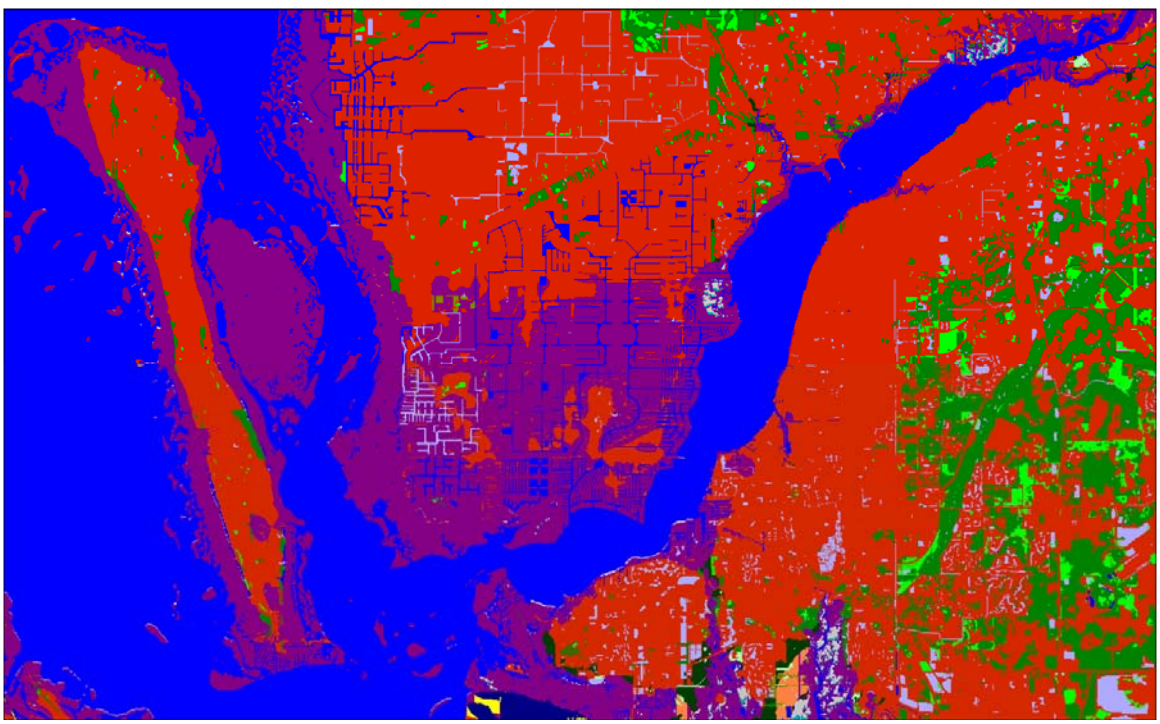
Matlacha Simulation Context, 2075, 1 meter eustatic SLR by 2100



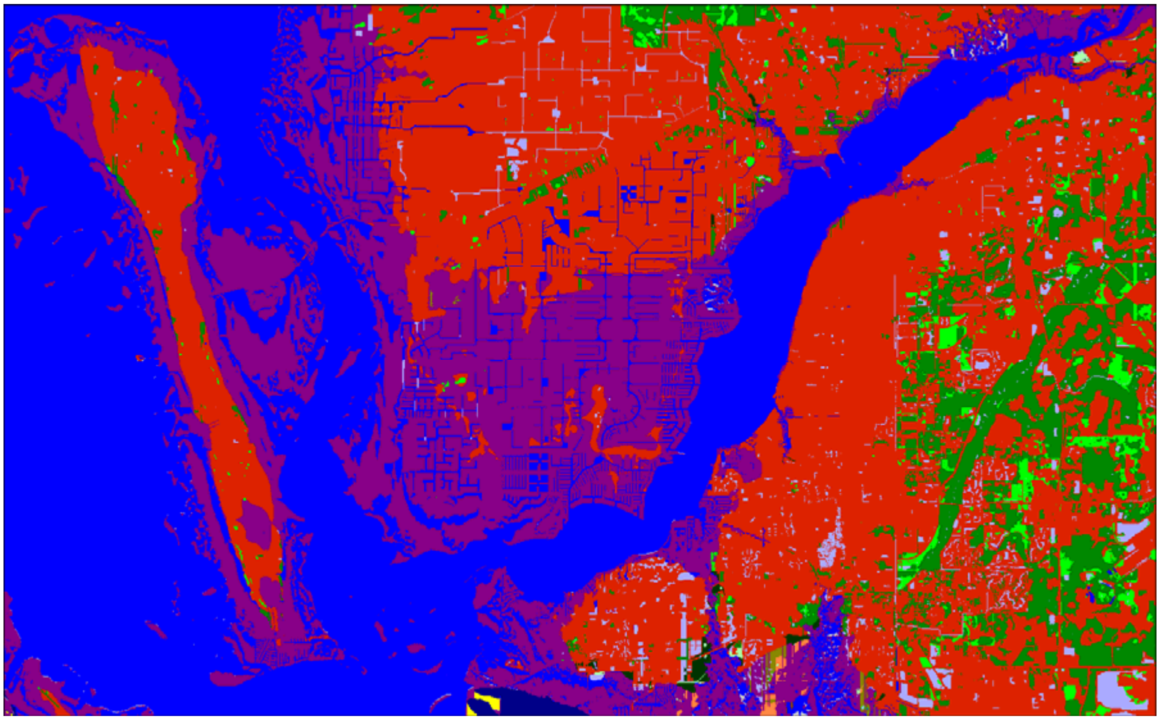
Matlacha Simulation Context, 2100, 1 meter eustatic SLR by 2100



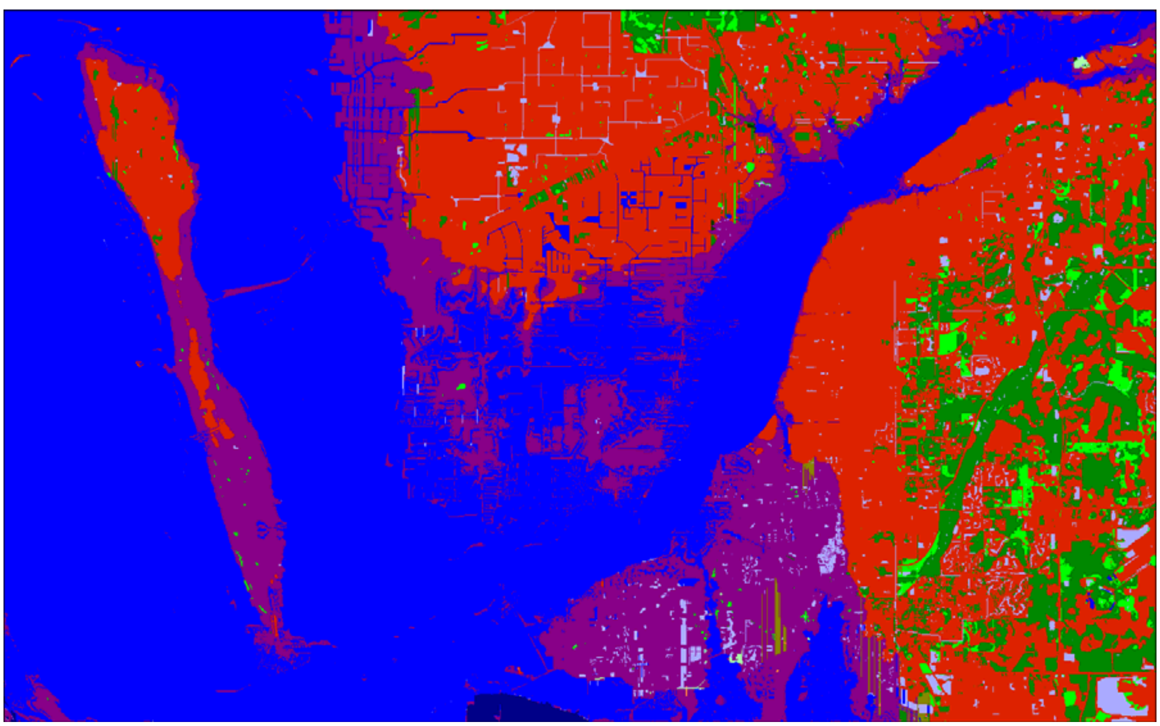
Matlacha Simulation Context, Initial Condition



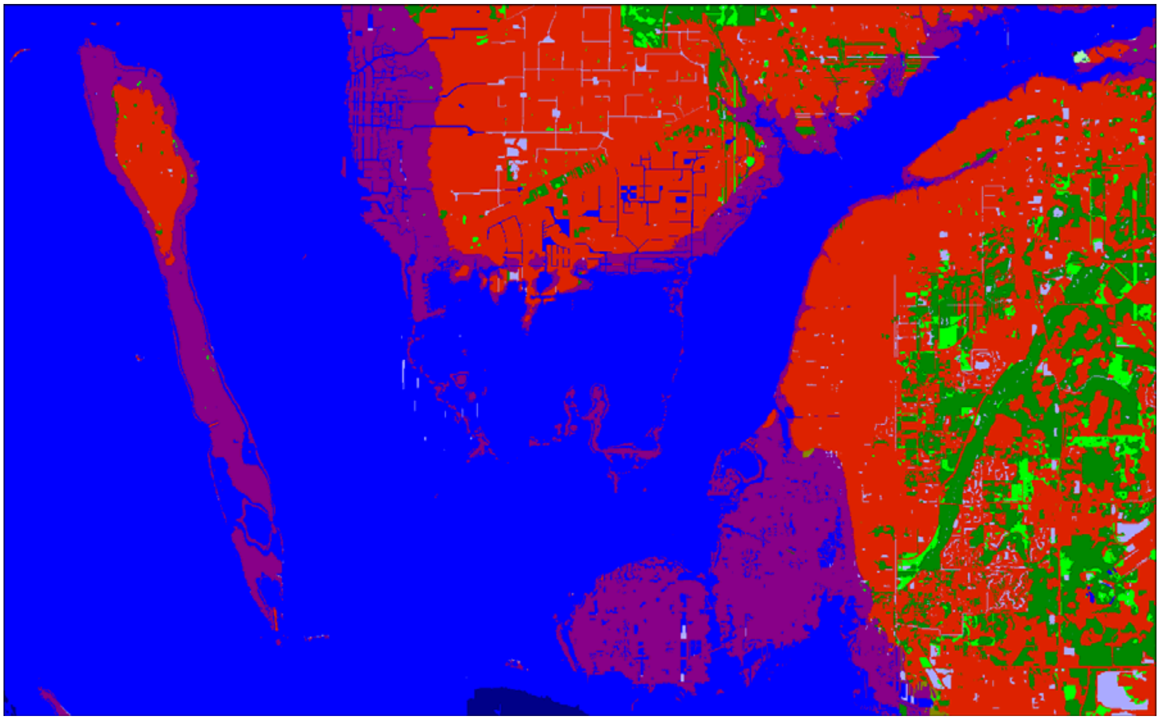
Matlacha Simulation Context, 2025, 1.5 meters eustatic SLR by 2100



Matlacha Simulation Context, 2050, 1.5 meters eustatic SLR by 2100



Matlacha Simulation Context, 2075, 1.5 meters eustatic SLR by 2100



Matlacha Simulation Context, 2100, 1.5 meters eustatic SLR by 2100